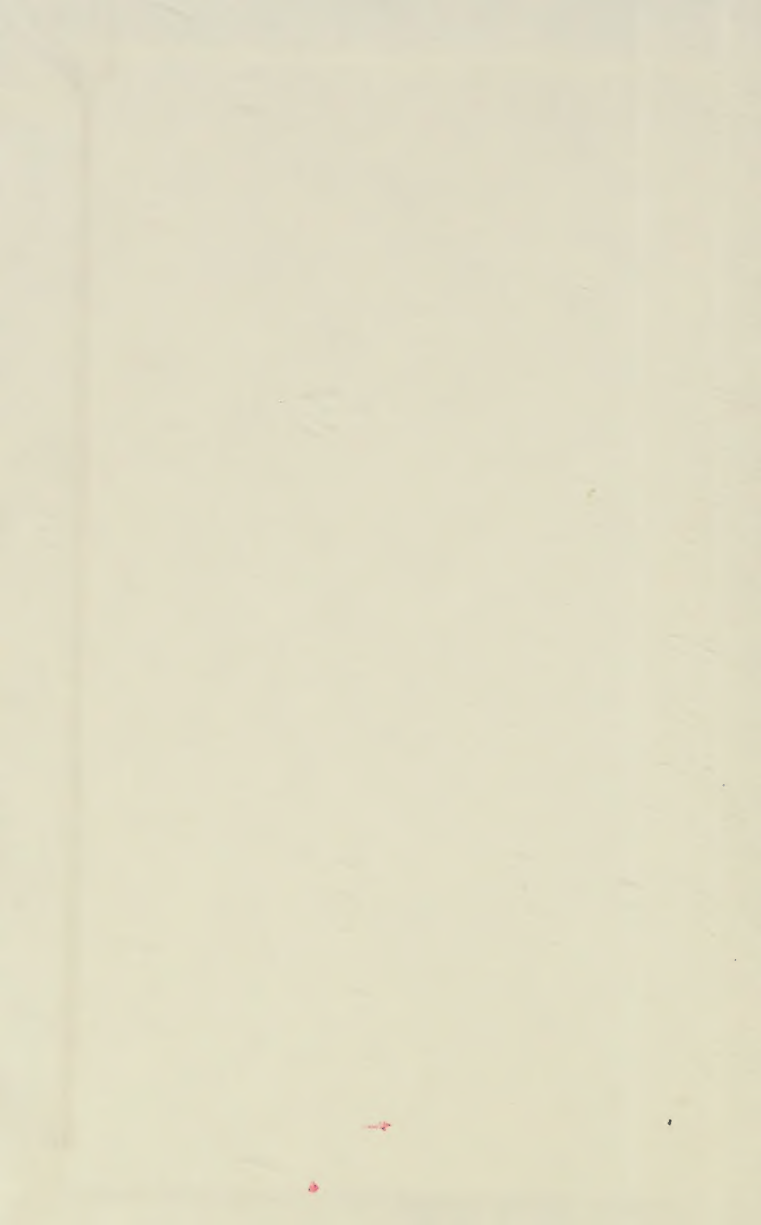








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# ABRAHAM LINCOLN MASTER OF WORDS

BY

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## PREFACE

DURING the past twenty years and more I have been so deeply interested in the study of Abraham Lincoln as a man and as a writer that some of my friends have charged me with showing the same tendency to revert to the subject, whatever my original intention, that is noted in Mr. Dick in connection with the execution of Charles the First. Indeed, at times I have suspected some of the shrewder of my students, under the stress of unpreparedness, of deliberately turning my attention in this direction, in the hope of postponing the day of reckoning to a more convenient season. I am willing at the outset to admit that Lincoln falls but little short of being the god of my idolatry. This is, however, a form of paganism that is not uncommon among the Americans of this generation and upon it I base the hope that these rather intensive studies

of his writings will be found worthy of attention.

In spite of the vast output of Lincoln literature during the past quarter of a century, the subject is far from being exhausted. Some of the most important material is not yet at the disposal of the student. To mention only two items, the Lincoln papers, rich in letters to Lincoln, many of them quite as important to the biographer as those written by him, have not yet been released, nor will they be available for a number of years, and the Hay Diary, a source of the utmost importance, is still in manuscript form, to be consulted only by special permission of the Harvard Library authorities. It is fair to assume that there are many other diaries and not a few memoirs of Lincoln's contemporaries, which, for various reasons, have not yet been published. The newspapers, too, have not yet been examined with the care that they deserve. A beginning in this latter direction has been made in the present study, many of the conclusions of which have been reached by the use of this

material. The attempt to measure the reception of the Gettysburg Address by its original hearers and readers is based in the main upon the examination of newspaper files and magazines from 1863. As a result of this examination the fact seems to be clearly established that, while the majority of persons failed to recognize the supreme merits of the address, there were a few discriminating critics, like George William Curtis and J. G. Holland, who realized that Lincoln had sounded the keynote of the occasion more effectively than the orator of the day. The various incorrect reports of the address recorded are not without significance. Much of this newspaper material bearing upon the Gettysburg Address is presented here for the first time. Without wishing to appear dogmatic I believe that we are warranted in absolutely denying the opinion, so often expressed by writers on Lincoln, that the Gettysburg Address was hastily written, in part either on the train or after reaching Gettysburg. This is one of the many Lincoln legends that seem to appeal to public taste. It

is believed, too, that the source of the apocryphal story of Everett's expressing his admiration of the address to Lincoln immediately after its delivery is correctly indicated in the chapter on the Gettysburg Address.

The chapter on Lincoln's Messages and Proclamations is believed to be the first systematic study of this interesting and significant class. No attempt has been made to prove or disprove the claim sometimes made that many of these documents were actually written by William H. Seward, since no external evidence has ever been produced on either side. The fact that Mr. Seward was an Episcopalian and that nowhere else in Lincoln's writings is the influence of the book of Common Prayer found is not sufficient to connect Seward with them. It is, however, quite possible, as in the case of the last paragraph of the First Inaugural, that some of the phrasing was suggested by the Secretary of State.

The two hitherto uncollected speeches printed in this volume were found in the *Springfield Journal*, an important Lincoln source that has

evidently not been examined with the care that it deserves. The first of these, the outline of a speech in the Legislature, is especially interesting because of the small number of speeches from this period that has been preserved.

We appear now over half a century after the death of Lincoln, to be entering upon a new period of study, in which criticism and appraisal will take the place of eulogy and reminiscence. We are perhaps only just beginning to approach the time for a just inventory of our great national treasure that bears the name of Abraham Lincoln. These studies are an attempt to help realize this highly desirable object. Whatever their faults, they have at least the merit of careful first-hand investigation. No statement, however apparently authoritative, has been accepted without verification, and in one case, the treatment of the *Lost Speech*, I have not hesitated to form a respectable minority of one.

Let no one fear that the reputation of our first American will suffer from a fresh and more searching study of his character and

achievement. The main facts of his life are already established beyond dispute. North and South, East and West, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is justly revered and he is hardly less admired in Europe, where he is recognized by intelligent students of our history as the foremost prophet of democracy.

DANIEL KILHAM DODGE



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# ABRAHAM LINCOLN MASTER OF WORDS

## CHAPTER I

### SPEECHES IN THE ILLINOIS LEGISLATURE AND IN CONGRESS

By a curious coincidence, William Ewart Gladstone and Abraham Lincoln were born in the same year, the *annus mirabilis*, 1809. But beyond the fact that both men became successful party leaders and orators the resemblance between them is confined to this accident of a common birth year. Born in easy circumstances and in the ruling class, attending the aristocratic Eton and Oxford, and entering Parliament in the same year in which Lincoln started his political career in Illinois, Gladstone achieved a brilliant success, not only as

statesman and orator, but also as a scholar. And yet, with all the advantages of birth, wealth, education, mental endowment and political influence, Gladstone left not a single piece of writing that has been given a place in the world's literature. During his lifetime thousands listened with delight to the polished periods that were rolled forth by his magnificent voice and yielded themselves ready captives to the charm of his personality; but now, only a little over a quarter of a century after his death, we may apply to his literary remains the severe words of the English reviewer of a century ago, "Who ever reads Gladstone's speeches?" Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Bixby, on the other hand, may be found on the walls of one of the colleges of Gladstone's own Oxford, placed there as a specimen of the purest English prose, and English schoolboys commit to memory Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" as the finest speech of its kind ever written in the English language.

The answer to this apparent puzzle is simple

enough. It is the same answer that we give to the question, so difficult to some foolish people, so obvious to most intelligent persons, how Shakespeare, the comparatively unlettered actor, was able to write the only plays of his time that still hold a place on the stage of the world, or how the rude plowboy of Ayrshire came to compose the most beautiful and best loved songs in the English language. Shakespeare and Burns and Lincoln composed classics simply because they had it in them to compose classics and there is no more mystery in the one case than in the other. Or, rather, there is as much mystery in the one case as in the other—the sublime mystery of genius. Each of these three men, living in different centuries and under markedly different conditions, had the insight into human nature and the gift of adequate expression that are essential to the production of great literature, whether in the drama, the lyric or the oration. It were idle to consider what would have been the result to literature if Shakespeare's father

had not lost his money and Shakespeare had become a university wit, or if Burns's father had been able to send his gifted son to the University of Edinburgh, or if Lincoln's grandfather had not moved to the frontier of Kentucky and Abraham Lincoln had entered Jefferson's new university. Genius seems to be able to take intellectual short cuts that are denied to ordinary folk. That does not mean that even genius can accomplish real results without effort. Success can be reached only by hard work, but the degree of his success is determined by the ability of the worker.

In choosing his vocation Lincoln unconsciously paved the way for his career as orator and statesman. Having in mind the experience of Scott and Stevenson, of Bryant and Lowell, to mention only two examples each from English and American authors, we are apt to think of the profession of law as inimical to success in literature. We must remember, however, that in the early days of Illinois the practice of the law, with its regular semi-

annual following of the circuit court from county seat to county seat, was something in the nature of an adventure, offering all the opportunity for the study of human nature that Dan Chaucer found in the motley company assembled at the Tabard Inn five hundred years ago. And Lincoln had much of the kindly, humorous, social nature that we attribute to the author of *The Canterbury Tales*. If he could not songs indite he could tell stories with rare skill and enjoyment and he never seemed to tire of communing with his fellow men of every degree. As a lawyer he made a careful study of human nature and his eminent success as a jury pleader—and he had no superior in this difficult art—was due far more to his knowledge of practical psychology than to his mastery of the principles of the law, profound as this latter was. In addressing Illinois juries, too, Lincoln developed a simplicity of expression that is reflected in the “Gettysburg Address” and the “Second Inaugural Address.” Another Illinoisian, who

is still living and who is known for the clearness and simplicity of his spoken and written word, was once asked how he had developed his wonderful style. He replied that for many years he had been addressing farmers' institutes on scientific subjects related to agriculture and that he had tried to use terms that combined accuracy of scientific statement with simplicity of vocabulary. Something of the same combination may be found in the style of Lincoln. The daily practice of his profession in the county seats of the eighth Illinois district was the best possible preparation for the Debates of 1858 and the state papers of the early 'sixties. The simplicity of statement that was necessary in order to convince the juries of the early Illinois days is no less convincing to the most critical readers of Lincoln's speeches two generations after his voice has ceased to be heard.

Although the earliest specimen of Lincoln's political writings that has been preserved is not a speech at all, it may properly be consid-

ered in connection with his early political speeches, as it is a natural preparation for them. This is the "Communication" to voters, in which Lincoln presented his platform as a candidate for the first time for the Illinois state legislature, published in the *Sangamon Journal*, known later as the *Springfield Journal*, in 1832. This "Communication" was apparently issued, also, in broadsides, though none of these has been preserved. In the standard editions of Lincoln's works this "Communication" is entitled an Address and the conclusion has not unnaturally been drawn by some writers that it was actually delivered by the author. It may be worth mentioning, as evidence that we are still without a critical edition of Lincoln's works, that an examination of the original shows not a few variations in the modern printed form.

Although we may not agree with Lincoln's biographers, Nicolay and Hay, that "this is almost precisely the style of his later years," we may find in it some of the elements that



were developed and refined twenty years later. We note, in the first place, the clear thinking that is the basis of all clear writing. The paragraph construction is admirable, the theme of each paragraph being stated in the opening sentence and its development following in severe logical order. Some of the sentences are rather awkward and there is an occasional infelicitous phrase and commonplace thought, but it would be strange if this were not the case in so inexperienced and untrained a writer. The claim has been made, apparently on good authority, that some of the grammatical errors were corrected by a friend before publication. This, too, seems perfectly natural. Even in later speeches, though never in the state papers, we occasionally find solecisms and to the end of his life Lincoln showed a tendency to use the split infinitive and myself instead of I. The Illinois bar in those days was not as critical, in the minutiae of spoken English, at least, as it is to-day and grammatical slips would have made no special impression on the general pub-



lic. Even from the present day I can recall some Illinois lawyers of prominence, and this phenomenon is by no means limited to Illinois, whose command of English has excited my proper envy but who would slip in an occasional "ain't" or "like he was." It is an almost impossible task wholly to eradicate early habits of speech.

One brief extract may be made from this "Communication," which is not without a certain pathetic interest in view of Lincoln's own early experiences:

"For my part, I desire to see the time when education, and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise and industry, shall become much more general than at present, and shall be gratified to have it in my power to contribute something to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate the happy period."

It is interesting to note in this connection that thirty years later Lincoln, as President,

signed the Morrill Act, by virtue of which the state university of his own state of Illinois was established two years after his death. That his approval of this act, in contrast to Buchanan's veto of a similar act, was not merely formal, is clearly shown by the fact that the only promise made by him before his election was one to Professor Jonathan B. Turner, of Illinois, the real father of this wise legislation, that, in the event of his election, he would approve such a measure, a similar promise having been made by his chief opponent and fellow Illinoisian, Stephen A. Douglas.

In almost all of his speeches Lincoln shows a marked tendency to close with an effective sentence or paragraph, a common rhetorical device, the purpose of which is evident. This is especially familiar in connection with the "Cooper Institute Address," the two "Inaugurals" and the "Gettysburg Address," but it is no less conspicuous in many other speeches, both early and late. Lord Charnwood, how-

ever, is perfectly right in his claim that the Debates show a curious tendency to close abruptly, without any attempt at a peroration. This departure from Lincoln's usual method is evidently due to the fact that, unlike the formal speeches, the Debates were not written and that they were unavoidably more informal and personal. Indeed, in several instances in the Debates Lincoln did not close at all but simply "quit," because his time was up.

The "Communication" sounds a personal note, which Lincoln in his later writings usually avoids: "But, if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointment to be much chagrined." In addressing his friends and neighbors Lincoln allowed himself a freedom and intimacy of speech that would have been improper in his later and broader appeals. In spite of his indifference to what he regarded as unimportant conventions, Lincoln had a keen sense of propriety. He was always more concerned about

principles that personalities and he appealed to reason rather than to prejudice.

Herndon prints what he calls Lincoln's first speech, delivered in 1832, in this same campaign, which he states was written out by a friend, in 1865, from notes. It is not included in the collected works, partly, perhaps, because of the prejudice of the editors to Herndon, and its authenticity is more than doubtful, but in the absence of any better report it may be given here:

“Fellow citizens, I presume you all know who I am. I am humble Abraham Lincoln. I have been solicited by many friends to become a candidate for the Legislature. My politics are short and sweet, like the old woman's dance. I am in favor of a national bank. I am in favor of the internal-improvement system and a high protective tariff. These are my sentiments and political principles. If elected I shall be thankful; if not it will be all the same.”

Although the principles stated in this speech agree in the main with the more formal utterances of the "Communication," the style is in marked contrast to that of any recorded remarks by Lincoln. Indeed, the remark, "I am humble Abraham Lincoln," sounds far more like Uriah Heep than Lincoln. Unlike many politicians, Lincoln never tried to make political capital out of his early poverty and hardships. In fact, he seems, as a rule, to have deliberately avoided any direct reference to his early life, just as Dickens found the impressions of his neglected childhood too bitter for words. Lincoln once described his life as "the short and simple annals of the poor." The extreme brevity of Herndon's report is, also, suspicious. Bearing in mind the exquisite literary cameos, the "Farewell Speech" and the "Gettysburg Address," many uninformed persons might be inclined to draw the conclusion that brevity was the soul of Lincoln's wit. This is quite from the truth. Although Lincoln was capable, to a remarkable degree, of expressing

his ideas in condensed form, his natural inclination, as shown in all his political speeches, including the Debates, seems to have been, not towards discursiveness, for he is always severely logical, but towards a rather ample treatment of his subject. Those were the days of long speeches, as of long sermons, and Lincoln naturally followed the prevailing fashion.

Of Lincoln's early success as a parliamentary debater we have, unfortunately, only imperfect knowledge. Although he was a very active member of the state legislature for eight years, was twice his party candidate for speaker, was a member of important committees and chairman of some, only one of his legislative speeches has been preserved in full and a few others are merely paraphrased in the reports of the sessions and in the columns of the Springfield papers. Even these imperfect reports, however, show certain qualities that are conspicuous in his later speeches—simplicity and clearness of expression and a perfect mastery of the subject under discussion.

As an example of this less familiar side of Lincoln's speaking, let us take the following outline of a speech made in December, 1840, near the close of his legislative career, and reported in the *Springfield Journal*. It has the special interest now of novelty, as it is not included in the collected works and is printed here for the first time since its original appearance over eighty years ago:

"Mr. Lincoln offered for adoption a resolution raising a select committee, to inquire into the causes which have produced so large an expenditure for public printing, and to report a bill for the purpose of reducing the expenditures of that item, if in their opinion it can be done without detriment to the public good.

"Mr. Lincoln said he did not offer the resolution by way of attack upon the public printer, or any one else. He was in possession of no fact which would justify him in so doing. He did not expect that more was printed than was ordered, or more was charged for it than the



law allowed. He was disposed to believe, if there was any fault, it was at our own door. He had just read the Message of the Governor of Indiana, in which he called the attention of their legislature to the enormous expenditure of twelve thousand dollars for public printing. Thus it would seem that in our sister state, with a population doubling ours, twelve thousand dollars was called an enormous expenditure, whilst we, with only half the population and doubly more embarrassed, were paying twenty thousand dollars for the same object! To remove all suspicion of his having the management of this committee for the purpose of making a party matter of it, he desired that the chair would not appoint him upon the committee."

It is worth while noting that during the later years of his service in the legislature Lincoln was chairman of the finance committee and that as a result of this he frequently spoke on the subject of state finance, one of his speeches

from 1837, the only one reported in full, dealing with the banking system. Lincoln was also closely identified with the movement for developing the resources of the state, especially by increasing the means of communication by water and rail, and he seems to have shown no more foresight and self-restraint than his fellow members in supporting measures financially unsound, for the furtherance of these interests. In this one instance Lincoln's judgment was overshadowed by his enthusiasm. In marked contrast to this interest in financial questions during the legislative period is his apparent indifference to the subject when on the stump and, with one exception, in Congress. During the presidency, too, he seems to have left these matters to his Secretaries of the Treasury.

## CHAPTER II

### ON THE PLATFORM AND IN CONGRESS

DURING the early period of his public speaking Lincoln showed a tendency that is in marked contrast to the simplicity and restraint of his later writings, a rhetorical tendency, which may fairly be regarded as a sort of infantile writer's disease, verbal mumps or measles. It will be recalled that Shakespeare shows a similar fondness for fine writing of a different sort in his earliest comedy, "Love's Labour's Lost." This outbreak occurs, not in connection with the political speeches proper, but in a form which the later Lincoln seldom used—the occasional address. Lincoln might properly have paraphrased the words of Marc Antony and said, "I am no orator, as Webster or Everett is." Like Clay, he never seems to

have sought occasions to speak in public and when he did speak he usually had some immediate end in view. He once said, during the presidential period, "I believe I shall never be old enough to speak without embarrassment when I have nothing to talk about." He spoke, not to entertain or to impress, but to persuade and convince his hearers. In his speaking he suggests the lawyer addressing the jury rather than an orator appearing before an audience. We find not a single Independence Day oration and, if he had survived the Civil War, it is doubtful whether he would have cared to speak at Memorial Day meetings. His presence at the Gettysburg celebration was official, and he spoke there simply because his position required him to speak. The official orator of the day was not Lincoln but Everett, although the supreme court of posterity has failed to sustain the action of the committee on arrangements and has given first place to Lincoln's brief remarks.

The earliest specimen of rhetorical speech

that has been preserved is the address before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, of January 23, 1837, and its subject is "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions." The opening sentence is what Lincoln himself might later have called "highfalutin'": "In the great journal of things happening under the sun, we, the American people, find our account running date of the nineteenth century." This eulogy of our country is more suggestive of Mr. Jefferson Brick than of Lincoln, as we know him now: "All the armies of Europe, Asia, and Africa, combined with all the treasure of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest, with a Bonaparte for a commander, could not by force take a drink from the Ohio or make a track on the Blue Ridge in a trial of a thousand years."

But the speech is not all mere rhetoric, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." In the description of the fathers of the American Revolution there is a passage not unworthy of the later Lincoln at his best:

“They were a forest of great oaks; but the all-restless hurricane has swept over them and left only here and there a lonely trunk, despoiled of its verdure, shorn of its foliage, unshading and unshaded, to murmur in a few more gentle breezes, and to combat with its mutilated limbs a few more ruder storms, then to sink and be no more.” Here is a fine prose-rhythm together with a nice selection of words and an appeal to the historical imagination that is possible only to one gifted with a feeling for style of the first order. The concluding sentence, both in form and content, is wholly in the spirit of the later Lincoln: “Upon these let the proud fabric of freedom rest, as the rock for its basis; and as truly as has been said of the only greater institution, ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’.”

But not only does the speech contain many purple patches like these, it is fully justified by its clearness and unity of thought. The main argument presented is the sanctity of law

and order, a failure to honor which the speaker regards as a fatal blow to freedom. Lincoln never departed from this principle. No plea of expediency could ever urge him, as President, to support any measure however important, that, in his opinion, was not in agreement with the Constitution, though at times his understanding of constitutional limitations was severely criticized. Just as we find suggestions of his later style in these early utterances, so, too, the elements of his later political thought and action can be clearly seen in his first political program, the "Communication," of 1832, and in his speeches in the legislature and on the platform.

The following extract from the *Sangamon Journal*, for 1837, is worth quoting in this connection as being the earliest appreciation of Lincoln as a speaker that has been preserved:

"*Resolved*, that the thanks of this Lyceum be presented to A. Lincoln, Esq., for the Lecture delivered by him this evening, and that he



be solicited to furnish a copy for publication.  
Attest: Jas. H. Matheny, Sec'y."

Lincoln was one of the organizers of the Springfield Lyceum and for many years continued to take an active interest in it

In December, 1839, Lincoln made his first purely political speech that has been preserved and at the same time crossed swords with Stephen A. Douglas, nineteen years before the great Debates. This speech was delivered in the old state house at Springfield in the evening, in reply to a three-hour speech by Douglas in the same place that afternoon. Lincoln's speech evidently made a strong impression, as it was published in pamphlet form. Although the speech resembles the Debates in its general style, being throughout serious and argumentative, it differs from them in subject matter, which was the national bank, of which Lincoln was a warm supporter, in opposition to the Democratic plan of the subtreasury. In one

respect the speech is in marked contrast to the Debates in that it contains a highly rhetorical peroration. This difference is undoubtedly due to the fact that it was a carefully prepared speech, perhaps written out in full before its delivery, whereas the Debates were extempore, so far as the exact language was concerned. The rather hyperbolical style of the peroration reflects Lincoln's less severe taste from this early period. This brief extract will suffice to show its character:

“Many free countries have lost their liberty, and ours may lose hers: but if she shall, be it my proudest plume, not that I was the last to desert, but that I never deserted her. I know that the great volcano at Washington, aroused and directed by the evil spirt that reigns there, is belching forth the lava of political corruption in a current broad and deep, which is sweeping with frightful velocity over the whole length and breadth of the land, bidding fair to leave

unscathed no green spot or living thing; while on its bosom are riding, like demons on the waves of hell, the imps of that evil spirit, and fiendishly taunting all those who dare resist its destroying course with the hopelessness of their effort; and, knowing this, I cannot deny that all may be swept away. Broken by it I, too, may be; bow to it I never will. The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just; it shall not deter me. If ever I feel the soul within me elevate and expand to those dimensions not wholly unworthy of its almighty Architect, it is when I contemplate the cause of my country, deserted by all the world beside, and I standing up boldly and alone, and hurling defiance at her victorious oppressors. . . . But if, after all, we shall fail, be it so. We still shall have the proud consolation of saying to our consciences, and to the departed shade of our country's freedom, that the cause approved of our judgment, and adored of our hearts, in

disaster, in chains, in torture, in death, we never faltered in defending.”

The second and last rhetorical speech is the address delivered before the Washingtonian Temperance Society of Springfield on Washington's Birthday, 1842. Lincoln was not only himself a total abstainer, but he was actively interested at that time in the cause of temperance, so that his willingness to speak on this occasion was in perfect keeping with his practical aims as a speaker. Like its predecessor, the address closes with a splendid peroration, which, while less familiar than the close of the “First Inaugural Address,” is hardly inferior to it:

“This is the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the birthday of Washington: we are met to celebrate this day. Washington is the mightiest name of earth—long since mightiest in the cause of civil liberty, still mightiest in moral reformation. On that name no eulogy

is expected. It cannot be. To add brightness to the sun or glory to the name of Washington is alike impossible. Let none attempt it. In solemn awe pronounce the name, and in its naked deathless splendor leave it shining on."

Curiously enough, in the four short speeches delivered by Lincoln on the same day in Pennsylvania, nineteen years later, only one brief reference is made to Washington, although one of the speeches was given in Independence Hall. These speeches were not prepared and the president elect did not know beforehand that he would be called upon to speak in Independence Hall, where, he said, "I supposed I was merely to do something toward raising a flag." From what he said, however, it is evident that he had lost none of his early veneration for the Father of his Country.

Although Lincoln served only a single term in Congress, he made a number of speeches, one of which, really a stump speech, is distinguished by its markedly humorous character.

This positive quality of his principal congressional speech affords an opportunity to note a negative quality of most of Lincoln's other speeches, including all his formal addresses. Famous as he was as a teller of funny stories and fond as he was at all times of illustrating a point in conversation by an appropriate anecdote, in his public speaking Lincoln is usually serious. He himself once explained his reason for abstaining from using this obvious help in the Debates, when urged to do so by a friend, by saying: "The occasion is too serious, the issues are too grave. I do not seek applause, or to amuse the people, but to convince them." As we have already noted, the persuasion of people, not their amusement, was always Lincoln's first purpose. As a political speaker he dealt with serious subjects at a critical period and he dealt with them in an appropriately serious and substantial manner. It is possible that in the Campaign Speeches, from 1840 to 1856, which have been reported in very small part and in fragmentary form, Lin-

coln resorted to funny stories to clinch his political arguments, but if he did so there is no record of the fact. There is some evidence, however, furnished by newspaper reports of political meetings held in the first republican campaign, in 1856, that some of these campaign speeches, at least, were not wholly serious, as in the following from *The Springfield Journal*, for August 4, 1856:

“Mr. Lincoln having been called upon, explained the object of the meeting, and made a graphic and forcible statement of the true issue in the impending struggle. His remarks were very happy, frequently interrupted by applause and sounds of laughter.”

Before Congress had been assembled a month, the new whig member from Illinois, the only representative of his party from his state in the Lower House, spoke for the first time, and as this was Lincoln's first speech of anything like a national character, aside from the unrecorded campaign speeches, it may be given



more attention than its intrinsic interest or importance really deserves. He refers to it himself in a letter to Herndon as follows:

✓ “As to speech making, by way of getting the hang of the House, I made a little speech two or three days ago on a post-office question of no general interest. I find speaking here and elsewhere about the same thing. I was about as badly scared, no more, as I am when I speak in court. I expect to make one within a week or two, in which I hope to succeed well enough to wish you to see it.”

The speech referred to in this letter was delivered January 12, 1848, and it deals with the burning party question of that day—the Mexican War. Like most whigs, Lincoln was strongly opposed to the war, for which he could find no justification, and although he never failed to vote in favor of granting supplies to the army, he took advantage of every opportunity to voice his disapproval of the democratic policy. Although the speech is in the

main a very clear and close argument against the President's war policy, it is occasionally relieved by passages of real beauty and imagination, as in the following:

“Let him remember he sits where Washington sat, and so remembering, let him answer as Washington would answer. As a nation should not, and the Almighty will not, be evaded, so let him attempt no evasion—no equivocation. . . . But if he cannot or will not do this—if on any pretense or no pretense he shall refuse or omit it—then I shall be fully convinced of what I more than suspect already—that he is deeply conscious of being in the wrong; that he feels the blood of this war, like the blood of Abel, is crying to heaven against him; that originally having some strong motive—what, I will not stop now to give my opinion concerning—to involve the two countries in a war, and trusting to escape scrutiny by fixing the public gaze upon the exceeding brightness of military glory—that attractive rainbow that

rises in showers of blood, that serpent's eye that charms to destroy—he plunged into it, and was swept on and on till, disappointed in his calculation of the ease with which Mexico might be subdued, he now finds himself he knows not where. How like the half-insane mumbling of a fever dream is the whole part of his late message.”

The conclusion is no less effective and severe than the passage just quoted:

“After all this, this same President gives a long message, without showing us that as to the end he himself has even an imaginary conception. As I have before said, he knows not where he is. He is a bewildered, confounded, and miserably perplexed man. God grant he may be able to show there is not something about his conscience more painful than his mental perplexity.”

The note of strong, personal invective heard here is one seldom sounded by Lincoln, who,

both in his law practice and in his public speaking, relied in the main upon sober argument. Even in the Debates, where the temptation to indulge in personalities must have been especially great, he seldom attacks Douglas.

In even more striking contrast to his usual form of oratory is the speech of July 27, 1848, entitled, "General Taylor and the Veto." It is really a stump speech and distinctly humorous and at times ironical. The personal note of the earlier speech is again sounded, not in the form of invective but of ridicule. The person thus assailed is the democratic candidate for the presidency, General Cass. A single extract will suffice to show the character of the criticism:

"But I have introduced General Cass' accounts here chiefly to show the wonderful physical capacities of the man. They show that he not only did the labor of several men at the same time, but that he often did it at sev-

eral places, many hundreds of miles apart, at the same time. And at eating, too, his capacities are shown to be quite as wonderful. From October, 1821, to May, 1822, he ate ten rations a day in Michigan, ten rations a day here in Washington, and near five dollars' worth a day on the road between the two places! And then there is an important discovery in his example—the art of being paid for what one eats, instead of having to pay for it. Hereafter, if any nice, young man should owe a bill which he cannot pay in any other way, he can just board it out. Mr. Speaker, we have all heard of the animal standing in doubt between two stacks of hay and starving to death. The like of that would never happen to General Cass. Place the stacks a thousand miles apart, he would stand stock-still midway between them, and eat them both at once, and the green grass along the line would be apt to suffer, too, at the same time. By all means make him President, gentlemen. He will feed you bounte-

ously—if—if there is any left after he shall have helped himself.”

The speech closes with another unusual feature, the illustration of a point by a funny story. Because of its unusual character it perhaps deserves quotation:

“I have heard some things from New York; and if they are true, one might well say of your party there, as a drunken fellow once said when he heard the reading of an indictment for hog-stealing. The clerk read on till he got to and through the words, ‘did steal, take, and carry away ten boars, ten sows, ten shoats, and ten pigs,’ at which he exclaimed, ‘Well, by golly, that is the most equally divided gang of hogs I ever did hear of!’ If there is any other gang of hogs more evenly divided than the democrats of New York are about this time, I have not heard of it.”

During his second year in Congress Lincoln presented two resolutions of immense interest,

the first favoring compensated emancipation of slaves in the District of Columbia and freedom for all children of slave mothers born in the District on or after January 1, 1850. Although the House refused to act favorably on this suggestion, this resolution may be regarded as the first step in the direction that culminated in the passing of the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery throughout the United States. The second resolution, presented in September, expressed sympathy with the cause of Hungarian freedom. Great enthusiasm for this attempt at self-determination had been aroused throughout the country by the visit of Kossuth, but Lincoln undoubtedly was not induced to support it from political expediency because it found favor with his constituents. Like Clay, Lincoln had a keen sense of justice and a passionate love of liberty and the resolutions, which were almost certainly written as well as presented by him, expressed the sincere feelings of the speaker. They read in part as follows:



*“Resolved, That in their present glorious struggle for liberty, the Hungarians command our highest admiration and have our warmest sympathy.*

*“Resolved, That they have our most ardent prayers for their speedy triumph and final success.”*

Owing to political conditions Lincoln was not renominated for Congress, but during his single term he achieved a reputation, both on the floor and in committee, equaling that of many of the oldest members. Apparently he could always command a hearing and, although he was in the minority and most of the measures supported by him failed of passage, there is ample evidence that he was one of the most popular members of the Lower House. Curiously enough, one of his warmest admirers among his colleagues was Alexander H. Stephens, destined to become the vice president of the Confederacy.

During the summer of 1848, Lincoln visited

New York State and New England. A great admirer of John Quincy Adams he was appropriately appointed a member of the congressional delegation to accompany the body of the former president to its burial place in Massachusetts, and he delayed his return to Illinois in order to deliver a number of speeches in support of General Taylor. Henry J. Raymond, in *Life and Public Service of Abraham Lincoln*, published in 1865, says of this trip:

“The journals of the day note his presence at the Massachusetts State Convention, during his brief visit to New England, and speak in terms of the highest praise of an address delivered at New Bedford.”

Lincoln delivered an address at the state convention in Worcester, which was described in a local paper as “a truly masterly and convincing speech.” In another paper it was characterized as “one of the best speeches ever heard in Worcester.” On the evening of September 22, he spoke at Tremont Temple, Bos-

ton, appearing on the same platform with William H. Seward, with whom, twelve years later, he engaged in the contest for the republican nomination for the presidency. On the way home Lincoln passed through Albany, where he met Thurlow Weed, Seward's campaign manager in 1860. He visited Niagara Falls, which made a strong appeal to his historical imagination.

The main significance of the congressional period, so far as this study is concerned, lies in the fact that it brought Lincoln in close personal touch with many of the whig leaders of the day and introduced him as a speaker to a larger and more varied audience than he had hitherto been able to command. During the early years of his political career Lincoln had developed into one of the leading politicians of Illinois. From now on he must be regarded as an important national figure.

## CHAPTER III

1852—1858

DURING the interval between his leaving Washington, in 1849, and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise Act, in 1854, Lincoln devoted himself in the main to his law practice, which had suffered seriously from his political activity. On completing his term he had been offered the governorship of the Oregon Territory, but, apparently out of consideration for his wife and to his own ultimate advantage, he decided to remain in Springfield. The only formal address from this nonpolitical period that has been preserved is the "Eulogy on Henry Clay," delivered in the state house at Springfield, July 16, 1852. This is, also, the only important eulogy, with one exception, that Lincoln is known to have pronounced and the subject is especially appropriate, for in the

course of the Debates Lincoln said of Clay, "He is my beau ideal of an orator." He might have added of a statesman, for no other political leader of that time exerted on Lincoln anything like the influence that Clay did. One passage from this splendid eulogy—splendid as much for its perfect sincerity as for its verbal beauty—deserves quotation here, both as indicating the style of the composition and as being applicable, almost without the change of a word, to Lincoln's own method of public speaking and his ideals of public service:

"Mr. Clay's eloquence did not consist, as many fine specimens of eloquence do, of tropes and figures, of antithesis and elegant arrangement of words and sentences, but rather of that deeply earnest and impassioned tone and manner which can proceed only from great sincerity, and a thorough conviction in the speaker of the justice and importance of his cause. This it is that truly touches the chords of sympathy, and those who heard Mr. Clay

never failed to be moved by it, or ever afterwards forgot the impression. All his efforts were made for practical effect. He never spoke merely to be heard. He never delivered a Fourth of July oration, or a eulogy on an occasion like this. As a politician or statesman, no one was so habitually careful to avoid all sectional ground. Whatever he did he did for the whole country. In the construction of his measures he ever carefully surveyed every part of the field, and duly weighed every conflicting interest. Feeling as he did, and as the truth surely is, that the world's best hope depended on the continued Union of these States, he was ever jealous of, and watchful for, whatever might have the slightest tendency to separate them.

“Mr. Clay's predominant sentiment, from first to last, was a deep devotion to the cause of human liberty—a strong sympathy with the oppressed everywhere, and an ardent wish for their elevation. With him this was a primary and all-controlling passion. Subsidiary

to this was the conduct of his whole life. He loved his country partly because it was his own country, and mostly because it was a free country; and he burned with a zeal for its advancement, prosperity, and glory, because he saw in such the advancement, prosperity, and glory of human liberty, human right, and human nature. He desired the prosperity of his countrymen, partly because they were his countrymen, but chiefly to show to the world that freemen could be prosperous."

There is no reason to suppose that, in 1852, four years before the establishment of the party that was to succeed the whig party of Clay, Lincoln had any anticipation that the cloak of the prophet would fall on his shoulders. The splendid, closing words of the eulogy must be regarded simply as an expression of his political philosophy, a philosophy not wholly free from mysticism:

"But Henry Clay is dead. His long and eventful life is closed. Our country is prosper-



ous and powerful; but could it have been quite all it has been, and is, and is to be, without Henry Clay? Such a man the times have demanded, and such in the Providence of God was given us. But he is gone. Let us strive to deserve, as far as mortals may, the continued care of Divine Providence, trusting that in future national emergencies He will not fail to provide us the instruments of safety and security."

The great "Peoria Speech," of October 16, 1854, marks the return of Lincoln to politics and it may also properly be regarded as preparing the way for the Debates of four years later. For it not only dealt with the same general questions involved in these Debates—the extension of slavery into the territories and the question of the justice or injustice of the institution of slavery itself—but it was actually a rejoinder to Senator Douglas, who had delivered a speech at the same place that afternoon. Apparently preceding this speech by a few

months are some interesting fragments on slavery, in which Lincoln, with his remarkable ability to get at the fundamentals of a subject, exposes the injustice of the whole system. The following extract will serve to give an idea of the central thought of these political reflections, which equal in profundity the best of Bacon's Essays:

“Equality in society beats inequality, whether the latter be of the British-aristocratic sort or of the domestic-slavery sort. We know Southern men declare that their slaves are better off than hired laborers amongst us. How little they know whereof they speak! There is no permanent class of hired laborers amongst us. Twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer. The hired laborer of yesterday labors on his own account to-day, and will hire others to labor for him to-morrow. . . . Free labor has the inspiration of hope; pure slavery has no hope. The power of hope upon human

exertion and happiness is wonderful. The slave master himself has a conception of it, and hence the system of tasks among slaves. The slave whom you cannot drive with the lash to break seventy-five pounds of hemp in a day, if you will task him to break a hundred, and promise him pay for all he does over, will break you a hundred and fifty. You have substituted hope for the rod. And yet perhaps it does not occur to you that to the extent of your gain in the case, you have given up the slave system and adopted the free system of labor."

Although dealing with the same subject as the Debates, the "Peoria Speech" differs from them in being more distinctly literary and imaginative. In the number of its quotations not strictly political and practical, for example, it surpasses all of Lincoln's other speeches. There are twelve quotations, seven of them from the Bible. For many orators twelve quotations in a speech of three hours

would not be at all remarkable. But Lincoln did not, as a rule, quote freely and some of his speeches do not contain any quotations. Apparently, his tendency to quote depended upon emotional, rather than intellectual, grounds, the quoted passages adding beauty and distinction, rather than clearness, to the spoken word. Thus, the very emotional "Second Inaugural Address" contains four times as many quotations as the more argumentative "First Inaugural Address," although it is only a fourth as long. In the "Peoria Address" we find to a preëminent degree those qualities ascribed by Lincoln to Clay: "That deeply earnest and impassioned tone and manner, which can proceed only from great sincerity, and a thorough conviction in the speaker of the justice and importance of his cause." Occasionally one is reminded of Lincoln's early rhetorical manner, as in the following:

"Our republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. Let us turn and wash it white in the

spirit, if not in the blood, of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claim of 'moral right' back upon its existing legal rights and its arguments of 'necessity.' Let us return it to the position our fathers gave it, and there let it rest in peace. Let us readopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it the practices and policy which harmonize with it. Let North and South—let all Americans—let all lovers of liberty everywhere join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union, but we shall have so saved it that the succeeding millions of free, happy people the world over shall rise up and call us blessed to the latest generation."

Again this felicitous quotation: "You can as easily argue the color out of the negro's skin, like the 'bloody hand,' you may wash it and wash it, the red witness of guilt still sticks and stares horribly at you." In its massing of facts and arguments the "Peoria Speech" antici-

pates the "Cooper Institute Address," of 1860. In spite of its frequent purple patches it is, like the later speech, a model of clear, convincing exposition and argument.

On May 29, 1856, the first state convention of the republican party was held at Bloomington and the keynote speech of the convention was made by Lincoln. According to the story, told by Henry C. Whitney in his *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, and repeated since by many other writers, "the reporters were so carried away by his eloquence that they forgot to take notes and could give no report to their newspapers." One of those present, however, a young lawyer from Champaign named Henry C. Whitney, took notes of the speech, from which he later reconstructed it. Whitney's report is not included in the Gettysburg edition of Lincoln's works and in the Federal edition it is preceded by a note, stating that Mr. Whitney did not claim that his report is literally correct, but that the argument is fol-

lowed, and that in many cases the sentences are Lincoln's own.

When we come to analyze the story of the "Lost Speech" all that is certain about it is that it is lost. It is extremely doubtful whether Whitney's version is more than a faint echo of the original and it is pretty certain that no better version will ever be discovered. But when it comes to the explanation of how the speech came to be lost we find ourselves on different and more uncertain ground. In the first place, the picture of the enthusiastic reporters, some of whom must have been democrats, dropping their well-sharpened pencils and forgetting their duties as reporters under the spell of Lincoln's eloquence, is not convincing. Reporters do not react that way. The greater the excitement and the deeper the interest the more promise of a good story and good stories are to be written, not listened to. Then, these democratic reporters, at least, would have found no difficulty in preserving their pro-



fessional calm under the most exciting circumstances at a Republican convention. The story seems to be too good to be true.

The real explanation of how the convention speech of 1856 was lost may be found, I believe, not in the excitement of the reporters, assuming that they were excited, but in a very common practice among newspaper editors of that time, including the editors of Chicago papers. As a rule, political speeches, even the most important ones, were not reported in full, a mere outline being regarded as sufficient. In the case of many speeches by the most prominent men of the time, not even an outline was published, the bare description of the meeting with the names of the speakers being given. On October 9, 1856, a political meeting at Peoria was addressed by Trumbull and Lincoln and it was reported as follows by the *Chicago Press*:

“We have neither time nor space to attempt a synopsis of their speeches. They fairly ex-

celled themselves and seemed to carry conviction to the minds of all who heard them."

A speech delivered by Lincoln at Springfield, on September 25, of the same year, is referred to in the same paper as being full of witty hits and replies. On August 30, the *Chicago Press* describes a meeting at Detroit as "the largest ever held in Michigan. There were five speakers." But none of the five speeches were reported even in outline. Finally we have an account of the "Lost Speech" itself, appearing in the same paper:

"Abram Lincoln of Springfield was next called out and made *the* speech of the occasion. Never has it been our fortune to listen to a more eloquent and masterly presentation of a subject. I shall not mar any of its proportions or brilliant passages by attempting even a synopsis of it. Mr. Lincoln must write it out and let it go before all the people. For an hour and a half he held the assemblage spell-bound by the power of his argument and the

deep earnestness of his eloquence. When he concluded, the audience sprang to their feet, and cheer after cheer told how deeply their hearts had been touched and their souls warmed up to a generous enthusiasm."

Lincoln did not act upon the suggestion that he write out the "Bloomington Speech," but apparently he did the next best thing. He practically repeated the speech on various occasions during the campaign and although the same reporter of the *Press* seems to have been present on these occasions he did not avail himself of the opportunity to preserve the speech.

Like many great men, Lincoln did not hesitate to repeat himself and in the course of a campaign he would give practically the same speech at many different places. | Perhaps a better idea of the "Bloomington Speech" than is given by Whitney's report may be found in the fragment of a speech delivered at Galena, in August, 1856, which closes with the words given by Whitney as part of the peroration of

the "Lost Speech": "*We* do not want to dissolve the Union; *you* shall not."

On December 10, 1856, Lincoln made a speech in Chicago of a kind seldom affected by him—a reply to a toast. Although it has not been preserved in full, enough of it remains to show that his manner of speaking on such an occasion differed but slightly, if at all, from his manner on the stump.

From 1857, only one speech has been preserved. It was made at Springfield, June 26, in reply to a speech of two weeks earlier by his old opponent, Douglas. Although it is less familiar than the second "Springfield Speech," of the following year, it is of importance as leading up to the Debates, which it closely resembles both in style and subject matter. Unlike the Debates it closes with an effective and picturesque figure:

"The plainest print cannot be read through a gold eagle; and it will be ever hard to find many men who will send a slave to Liberia, and

pay his passage, while they can send him to a new country—Kansas, for instance—and sell him for fifteen hundred dollars, and the rise.”

On June 16, 1858, Lincoln made a speech before the republican state convention in Springfield, at which he had been nominated for the United States Senate in opposition to Stephen A. Douglas. This speech contains the quotation: “A house divided against itself cannot stand,” from which it has received its familiar but awkward name. (The speech was very carefully prepared by Lincoln after long consideration and the MS. was submitted to several friends, all of whom advised him strongly against delivering it in that form. At that time Illinois was very conservative on the question of slavery and it was thought that so decided an expression of hostility to the peculiar institution would cost Lincoln the senatorship. Lincoln is reported to have remarked that while it might cost him the senatorship he

had in mind something more important. It is extremely doubtful whether Lincoln really made this remark, but there is no doubt that this speech had an important bearing upon the presidential election of 1860. The speech closes with one of the finest single passages in Lincoln's writings:

“Two years ago the republicans of the nation mustered over thirteen hundred thousand strong. We did this under the single impulse of resistance to a common danger, with every external circumstance against us. Of strange, discordant, and even hostile elements, we gathered from the four winds, and formed and fought the battle through, under the constant, hot fire of a disciplined, proud, and pampered enemy. Did we brave all then to falter now—now, when that same enemy is wavering, dissevered, and belligerent? The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail—if we stand firm, we *shall not fail*. Wise counsels may acceler-

ate or mistakes delay it, but, sooner or later, the victory is sure to come."

This is said to have been the only political speech that Lincoln read from manuscript. Although Lincoln always prepared his speeches very carefully, applying to his political addresses the same conscientious thought that he gave to his legal arguments, he apparently seldom wrote them out in full and, with this exception, never read from manuscripts. To be sure, he held a copy of the "Gettysburg Address" in his hand while delivering it, but apparently he did not refer to it and in several instances he actually departed from its original wording.

Lincoln delivered two other important campaign speeches before the Debates, one in Chicago, on July 10, the second, a week later, in Springfield. They are both replies to Douglas and they are both, to a great extent, in the informal, argumentative style of the Debates themselves. In the "Chicago Speech" we find



a striking example of Lincoln's ability to get at the fundamentals of a question, stripping it of all of its nonessentials. Lincoln says:

"I protest, now and forever, against that counterfeit logic which presumes that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave, I do necessarily want her for a wife."

Towards the close of the speech he states clearly and firmly his stand on the real meaning of the Declaration of Independence and at the same time illustrates his wise and statesmanlike policy of compromise, so different from the opportunism of the mere politician:

"My friend has said to me that I am a poor hand to quote scripture. I will try it again, however. It is said in one of the admonitions of our Lord, 'Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.' The Saviour, I suppose, did not expect that any human creature could be perfect as the Father in Heaven; but He said, 'As your

Father in heaven is perfect, be ye also perfect.' He set that up as a standard, and he who did most toward reaching that standard attained the highest degree of moral perfection. So I say in relation to the principle that all men are created equal, let it be as nearly reached as we can. If we cannot give freedom to every creature, let us do nothing that will impose slavery upon any other creature."

The closing sentence is of the highly imaginative kind so frequently found in Lincoln's closing words:

"I leave you, hoping that the lamp of liberty will burn in your bosoms until there shall no longer be a doubt that all men are created free and equal."

The later "Springfield Speech" repeats many of the arguments of its predecessor, though in different language. This reference to the desirable relations between white and

colored people is even more telling in its terseness than the earlier passage:

“All I ask for the negro is that if you do not like him, let him alone. If God gave him but little, that little let him enjoy.”

The great Debates between Lincoln and Douglas were held at seven different towns in Illinois, beginning at Ottawa, on August 21, and ending at Alton, on October 15. According to the terms agreed upon, each debate was to last three hours. At the first debate Douglas opened with a speech lasting one hour, he was followed by Lincoln with an hour and a half, and Douglas had half an hour to close. At the next meeting the time assignments were reversed. The challenge to this remarkable, verbal duel was issued by Lincoln, on July 24, as follows:

“Hon. S. A. Douglas. My dear Sir: Will it be agreeable to you to make an arrangement for you and myself to divide time and address

the same audiences of the present canvass? Mr. Judd, who will hand you this, is authorized to receive an answer, and, if agreeable to you, to enter into the terms of such arrangement. Your obedient servant, A. Lincoln."

As a result of various circumstances, one of the participants in this mighty political contest, which involved only incidentally the senatorship, has lost much of the prominence that he then enjoyed, while the other has gained the very first place among the political leaders of that period. Later events, too, have justified the stand taken by Lincoln and few would now hesitate, if called upon to express an opinion on the relative merits of the two presentations. But we must be careful not to allow our view of the matter to be distorted by this change in the valuation of the two speakers. If Lincoln was the only debater of whom Douglas was really afraid, we must not over-emphasize the positive side of Douglas's statement and ignore the equally important fact

that Douglas was not afraid of any one else except Lincoln. } An impartial study of the Debates must lead to the conclusion that the two speakers were very evenly matched and that the immediate success of Douglas and the ultimate triumph of Lincoln were due in the main to conditions over which neither man had any control. The real character of Douglas, too, has been misrepresented by most writers, whose sympathies were for Lincoln. To speak of Douglas as an unscrupulous politician is far beyond the mark. Douglas's splendid support of Lincoln three years later is sufficient vindication of his character and of his patriotism. If a majority of Lincoln's party followers had been as loyal to the President as his former political opponent during the first three months of his administration, his anxieties and troubles would have been sensibly lessened. Chicago did well in erecting a splendid statue to Douglas as well as to Lincoln.

In 1860, the Debates were published in Columbus, Ohio, from short-hand notes, some

minor verbal corrections being made by the authors. In addition to the seven debates, this volume contains five speeches by Lincoln, from 1858 and 1859, and three by Douglas, from July, 1858, together with the correspondence between the two candidates. This book was prepared by the Illinois republican state central committee, from copy furnished by Lincoln and Douglas and it was freely circulated in the presidential campaign.

## CHAPTER IV

### FROM THE "COOPER INSTITUTE ADDRESS" TO THE "SECOND INAUGURAL"

DURING September, 1859, Lincoln made two long speeches in Ohio, the second one in Cincinnati and addressed in part to the people of his native state across the river. These were regarded as being of sufficient importance to deserve a place in the volume of 1860. This "Cincinnati Speech" opens with a statement that is of interest as showing a remarkable change in relative civic values since then. Although Lincoln had made a short speech in Chicago earlier in the same year he was quite within the truth in stating the following: "This is the first time in my life that I have appeared before an audience in so great a city as this." He had probably forgotten his speech in Boston, in 1848. Both speeches are



unusually free from ornament and each closes abruptly, like the Debates. They are both among the longest of Lincoln's speeches from this period.

The "Cooper Institute Address," of February 27, 1860, is undoubtedly Lincoln's most substantial contribution to political literature, though it is far from being his most brilliant rhetorical performance. With regard to imagination and literary finish the "Peoria Speech," of 1854, and the first "Springfield Speech," of 1858, are superior to it, as are, also, the two "Inaugurals." It contains, however, a few purple patches and its tone is elevated throughout. [ While much more finished than the Debates, it is, like these, a carefully prepared argument, bristling with facts presented in the most convincing manner possible. Indeed, in the whole range of English oratory there is probably no more successful specimen of argumentation, judged both by literary and logical standards. Only in the concluding sentence do we hear the high literary note so

often sounded in Lincoln's other speeches. There is nothing finer in Burke or Webster than these words:

“Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.”

In this utterance may perhaps be found the main inspiration of another great American, addressing the people under different, though hardly less trying, national conditions.

Disregarding the later criticisms of the address, interesting as many of these (notably that of Mr. Choate) are, we may form an opinion of its immediate success from the following brief statement in the *New York Tribune* of the following day: “No man ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience.” To-day this

criticism seems commonplace enough, but to realize its full force we must remember that the speech was delivered under circumstances very trying to the speaker. In Illinois, among "home folks," Lincoln always felt confident and at ease. He was a practiced speaker and always sure of capturing and holding his audience. But in that great hall, one of the largest in the country, in the strange city, surrounded by the most brilliant men of the metropolis and introduced by the stately poet-editor, William Cullen Bryant, Lincoln was distinctly nervous and uncomfortable. He did not, however, express this feeling in his opening words, as he had done at Columbus and Cincinnati, for this was no stump speech, with the informality accompanying such utterances, but a dignified address, in which personalities would be distinctly inappropriate. The main feeling on the part of the audience was curiosity, not sympathy. It is evidence of the splendid courage of Lincoln that he was willing to face the difficult situation. It is no exaggera-

tion to say that his future success in national politics was largely determined by his great triumph on this occasion.

But the effect of the "Cooper Institute Address" was not limited to its delivery that evening. It was printed in the daily papers of New York and from them copied by other papers in different parts of the country. It was also printed as one of the cheap *Tribune* tracts and sold in large numbers. A carefully annotated edition of the speech was published by the *Tribune* as a political pamphlet, which, with the Columbus book of the Debates, formed one of the most effective documents in the presidential campaign that year. The editors of this pamphlet, two young lawyers named Charles C. Nott and Cephas Brainard, expressed their admiration of Lincoln's work as follows:

"No one who has not actually attempted to verify its details can understand the patient research and historical labor which it embodies.

. . . A single, easy, simple sentence of plain Anglo-Saxon words contains a chapter of history that, in some instances, has taken days of labor to verify and which must have cost the author months of investigation to acquire. . . . Commencing with this address as a political pamphlet, the reader will leave it as an historical work."

Before returning to Illinois Lincoln spoke in several of the larger cities of New England, but, with the exception of the speech at New Haven, only brief outlines of his remarks were published in the local papers. The peroration of the "New Haven Speech" exactly reproduces that of the original address and all of the speeches were along the same general line. Evidently Lincoln relaxed in these less formal speeches and at Hartford he even indulged in a funny story, as always, by way of illustration.

Lincoln took no active part in the campaign either for the nomination or the election. It

was not the custom in those days for presidential candidates to present their claims in public, and, unconventional as Lincoln was in minor matters, he was a careful observer of precedent in what he regarded as important public matters. He did not even attend the Chicago convention in May, but remained quietly at home, receiving the news of his nomination at the old state house. It must not be imagined, however, from this that Lincoln was given the nomination without effort on his part. His campaign was conducted from beginning to end with consummate skill, but he kept in the background, leaving the public work to his friends, several of whom were quite equal to meeting on equal terms even Seward's campaign manager, Thurlow Weed. With the exception of his formal letter of acceptance and a few brief speeches to his Springfield neighbors there is nothing to record until his exquisite little "Farewell Speech" of February 11, 1861, addressed to his friends and neighbors from the platform of the Wabash car

that bore him to Washington. The speech has been preserved in a number of slightly varying versions, in addition to an obviously incorrect form, which curiously enough appeared in one of the Springfield papers. According to J. H. Barrett, in his "Abraham Lincoln and his Presidency," referring to the version there printed, which contains about eighty more words than the Nicolay and Hay version, "this was the exact language as taken down at the moment and telegraphed through the land. No attempted rhetorical improvements have added to the force of its simple eloquence." Barrett assumes that Lincoln's farewell remarks were extempore, but in view of his careful preparation of the later responses to serenades and his lack of readiness of speech we may assume that Lincoln had at least carefully considered what he would say before leaving his home for the last time. He must have realized that every word that he uttered at that time would be printed in the newspapers of the country and that, therefore, it



was important he say nothing that could in any way reflect upon him. An illustration of his inability to express himself gracefully on short notice is furnished in connection with the Gettysburg celebration, when, on the evening before the event, Lincoln was called upon to make a response to a serenade. The result was one of the most dismal failures in the way of a speech that can be imagined. His political opponents, both in this country and abroad, were not slow to avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded to expose the incompetency of "Old Abe," that "prince of jesters," as one of them called him. While the Debates were delivered without notes and with only an occasional reading from documents, they were far from being impromptu speeches, so far as the assembling of facts and arguments is concerned. Lincoln seems to have been a deliberate, rather than a brilliant, thinker. He was slow to form an opinion and careful in his manner of expressing it in public. The result was that he seldom found it

necessary to change his opinions or to explain any statement.

On the journey to Washington the President elect made a number of speeches, all of them brief and all dealing with the pressing political questions of the day. The most interesting of these is the one delivered in Independence Hall on Washington's Birthday. In this speech Lincoln expressed a sentiment that frequently occurs in the Debates of 1858, his hearty devotion to the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence. ( It is a curious fact that in many instances the leaders in radical movements have been aristocrats by birth and that conversely many of the leading conservatives have been found among what Lincoln was fond of calling the plain people. It will be recalled that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the two most radical poets in England were Shelley, the son of a baronet and ultraconservative country squire, and Byron, a member of the peerage. Mirabeau, the most brilliant early leader of

the French Revolution, was the son of a marquis with the courtesy title of count, and Lafayette, the friend of the American colonists and later a republican in France, belonged to the same class. In Russia, many of the most advanced thinkers, including Tolstoi and Kropotkin, have been members of the aristocracy. It would be dangerous to generalize from these conspicuous examples, even were we to multiply their numbers many times. The truth probably is that the political tendencies in each case are in the main the result of individual temperament and habit of thought. Whatever the reason, Lincoln as a statesman was markedly conservative. Like his political guide, Henry Clay, he was a practical idealist, suspicious of political theories not based upon experience and reverencing the national law as embodied in the Constitution. As early as 1837, he expresses his "reverence for the Constitution" and later he urged the recognition of the Fugitive Slave Law. Profoundly as he hated the institution of slavery and deter-

mined as he was to oppose it by every proper means, he was unwilling to help the individual slave at the cost of breaking the law of the land. Lincoln was almost as strongly opposed to the extreme principles of the abolitionists, with their hatred of the Constitution because it permitted slavery, as to the equally extreme views of the secessionists. Both movements he regarded as lawless and, therefore, dangerous to the republic. If he were living now he would probably be a conservative but far from reactionary republican. He has given a clear and complete definition of his view of conservatism in the following passage in the "Cooper Institute Address":

"But you say you are conservative—eminently conservative—while we are revolutionary, destructive, or something of the sort. What is conservatism? Is it not adherence to the old and tried, against the new and untried? We stick to, contend for, the identical old policy on the point in controversy which was

adopted by 'our fathers who framed the government under which we live'; while you with one accord reject, and scout, and spit upon that old policy, and insist upon substituting something new. . . . Not one of all your various plans can show a precedent or an advocate in the century within which our government originated. Consider, then, whether your claim of conservatism for yourselves, and your charge of destructiveness against us are based on the most clear and stable foundations."

Again, in his condemnation of the John Brown raid, with which most radical republicans of the time sympathized, Lincoln showed his ability to subordinate his feelings to his reason. It required great moral courage for an ambitious republican politician to characterize that recent movement in such strong words as these:

"John Brown's effort was peculiar. It was not a slave insurrection. It was an attempt by white men to get up a revolt among slaves,

in which the slaves refused to participate. In fact, it was so absurd that the slaves, with all their ignorance, saw plainly enough it could not succeed. That affair, in its philosophy, corresponds with the many attempts, related in history, at the assassination of kings and emperors. An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people till he fancies himself commissioned by Heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt, which ends in little else than his own execution. Orsini's attempt on Louis Napoleon, and John Brown's attempt at Harper's Ferry, were, in their philosophy, precisely the same. The eagerness to cast blame on old England in the one case, and on New England in the other, does not disprove the sameness of the two things."

We are so accustomed to regard the "First Inaugural Address" as a masterpiece of English prose that it is difficult for us to realize that it has not always held this position in the

minds of competent judges. And yet, if we examine the criticisms made immediately after its delivery we find great diversity of opinion, with little, if any, true appreciation of its intrinsic literary merits. Indeed, nobody seemed to look for literary qualities in Lincoln's "First Inaugural Address." Inaugural addresses, as a rule, are not stimulating reading and it is not strange that at first people failed to recognize this swan among inferior birds.

Not only is there an absence of enthusiastic commendation, either of the form or the content, but in many cases there is violent adverse criticism of both. This unfavorable criticism comes in the main from two opposite but equally prejudiced classes of critics, the secessionists, on the one side, who found in Lincoln's appeal a definite threat of invasion, and the abolitionists, on the other side, who regarded Lincoln as having yielded to the sinister influence of the slave power. These two quotations, which have been strangely over-



looked by students of Lincoln, may serve to illustrate the two sides:

“If ignorance could add anything to folly, or insolence to brutality, the President of the Northern States of America has in this address achieved it. A more lamentable display of feeble inability to grasp the circumstances of this momentous emergency could scarcely have been exhibited.”

Thus the *Charleston Mercury*, of March 5, quoted in the *New York Times*, of March 9. The *Anti-Slavery Standard* is no less severe in the following editorial:

“The speech was made with the face turned towards the South and with both knees bowed down before the idol it worships (as have been all of those delivered from the same place for the last quarter of a century). It is only distinguished from such by the clumsiness of its construction and the vileness of its rhetoric. It is lucky for Mr. Lincoln that it was not

the Constitution of the English language, and the laws of English grammar that he was called upon to swear to support and enforce. For he would have been foresworn on the spot, before all the people. It was a paltry malice in Mr. Seward to allow a state paper so discreditable to his successful competitor to go to the world. He knew, when he read it over, that he would have whipped the youngest scholar he ever had when he kept school, for such a composition."

In a similar vein is the following estimate taken from the Petersburg *Express*:

"There is no pith, point, or substance in it, but it is a series of evasions, ambiguities, and inanities, from beginning to end. We do not suppose that any serious consequences will be attached to it anywhere."

Probably the impression made by the address upon intelligent persons not blinded by prejudice is best shown by this entry in Longfellow's journal for that day: "In the evening

we had his Inaugural Address, which is very conciliatory and firm." At that critical moment men were concerned with what Lincoln said, not with how he said it.

Only one criticism was found that combined indorsement of Lincoln's political views with an unfavorable estimate of his style. It was found in a German-American Roman Catholic paper, *Wahrheits Freund*, published in Cincinnati and evidently an organ of the conservative republicans, and reads in translation as follows: "Far more conservative and patriotic in its contents than beautiful and classical in its form." The only reasonable explanation of this curious criticism is that the author's limited knowledge of English made it impossible for him to appreciate the beauty of Lincoln's style.

The "Second Inaugural Address" is in as marked contrast to the "First Inaugural Address" as are the circumstances under which it was delivered compared to those of four years before. In the first place, it is only a

fourth as long as the earlier address. This difference in length is accounted for by the speaker himself in the opening sentence: "At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first."

Furthermore, the "First Inaugural Address" was in the main argumentative and all of Lincoln's speeches of this class tend to fullness of expression. The "Second Inaugural Address, on the other hand, is expository and emotional, resembling more closely the "Farewell Speech" and the "Gettysburg Address." In what may be called his lyrical mood Lincoln tends towards brevity. The longer, argumentative speeches might be compared to heroic statues, full of strength, combined with rare beauty; the shorter, emotional speeches suggest rather delicate cameos, in which grace and beauty are the predominating qualities.

We are not accustomed to associate the London *Times* with President Lincoln except as an unsympathetic, and often a harsh, critic.

Both in the news and the editorial columns the Thunderer usually leaned far toward the South. All the more remarkable, therefore, is this appreciation of the "Second Inaugural Address" which appeared in an editorial of the *Times*, for March 17, 1865:

"The circumstances under which Mr. Lincoln assumes office for another term of four years are so strange and impressive that they may justify an address full of a kind of Cromwellian diction and breathing a spirit very different from the usual, unearnest utterances of successful politicians. . . . We cannot but see that the President, placed in the most important position to which a statesman can aspire, invested with a power greater than that of most Monarchs, fulfills the duties which destiny has imposed on him with firmness and conscientiousness, but without any feeling of exhilaration at success or sanguine anticipation of coming prosperity. . . . Such language is not unbecoming a man who has been

continued in power avowedly that he may persist in a devastating war."

Even more interesting and significant than this editorial is the following brief comment of the special correspondent:

"I am just in time to hear Mr. Lincoln deliver the last words of his singular but pathetic address. Is he not far grander and wiser and greater to-day than when four years ago he came from Springfield?"

The New York *Times*, for March 5, speaks of "the extreme simplicity of this address, its calmness, its modesty, its reserve. We have a President who will be faithful to the end, let what betide."

But, as in the case of the "Gettysburg Address," it is not until after Lincoln's death that we find in the newspapers and elsewhere the superlative note that is now accepted as the right one. Perhaps the most adequate of the earlier posthumous appreciations is the follow-

ing passage found in a review of Raymond's "Life of Abraham Lincoln," in the *London Spectator*, which is all the more interesting because of its English source:

"For ourselves we cannot read his last inaugural address, delivered only five weeks before his assassination, without a renewed conviction that it is the noblest political document known to history, and should have, for the nation and the statesmen he left behind him, something of sacred and almost prophetic authority. Surely none was ever written under a stronger sense of God's government."

This seems to anticipate Carl Schurz's fine characterization:

"This was like a sacred poem. No American President had ever spoken words like these to the American people. America never had a President who found such words in the depth of his heart."

Reverting to the comparison of the two men in the opening chapter, we cannot fail to be



struck by this fine appreciation of Lincoln by Gladstone:

“I am taken captive by so striking an utterance as this. I see in it the effect of sharp trial, when rightly borne, to raise man to a higher level of thought and action. It is by cruel suffering that nations are sometimes born to a better life. So it is with individual man. Lincoln’s words show that upon him anxiety and sorrow have wrought their full effect.”

Lord Charnwood, in his biography of Lincoln, referring especially to the “Gettysburg Address” and the “Second Inaugural Address,” offers an interesting and plausible suggestion, especially interesting in view of Lincoln’s sympathetic reading and criticism of Shakespeare:

“The comparative rank of his oratory need not be discussed, for, at any rate, it was individual and unlike that of most other great

speakers in history, though perhaps more like that of some great speeches in drama."

Lincoln himself anticipated the verdict of later critics when he wrote to Thurlow Weed, of New York, concerning the "Second Inaugural Address":

"Every one likes a compliment. Thank you for yours on my little notification speech and the recent "Inaugural Address." I expect the latter to wear as well as—perhaps better than—anything I have produced, but I believe it is not immediately popular. Men are not flattered by being shown that there has been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them. To deny it, however, in this case, is to deny that there is a God governing the world."

In a letter to A. G. Hodges, of Kentucky, dated April 4, 1864, we may find the germ

of the next to the last paragraph of the "Second Inaugural Address":

"If God wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills, also, that we of the North, as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new causes to attest the justice and goodness of God."

Another anticipation is given by Noah Brooks in a report of an interview with two Southern women, in the course of which the President made this remark:

"You say your husband is a religious man; tell him when you meet him that I say I am not much of a judge of religion, but that, in my opinion, the religion that sets men to rebel and fight against their government because, as they think, that government does not sufficiently help *some* men to eat their bread in the sweat of *other* men's faces, is not the sort

of religion upon which people can get to heaven."

In a strain similar to that of the prejudiced criticism of the "First Inaugural Address" is the following editorial from the *Chicago Times*, of March 3, 1865:

"The inaugural addresses of the past Presidents of the United States are among the best of our state papers. . . .

"Contrast with these the inaugural address of Abraham Lincoln, delivered in the city of Washington on Saturday and printed in these columns this morning. What a fall was there, my countrymen. Was there ever such a coming out of the little end of the horn? Was ever a nation, once great, so belittled? Is such another descent of record in the history of any people?

"We had looked for something thoroughly Lincolnian, but we did not foresee a thing so much more Lincolnian than anything that has

gone before it. We did not conceive it possible that even Mr. Lincoln could produce a paper so slipshod, so loose jointed, so puerile, not alone in literary construction, but in its ideas, its sentiments, its grasp. By the side of it, mediocrity is superb."

In explanation of this vitriolic outburst it should be stated that the Chicago *Times* was a democratic organ, whose publication was suppressed for a time during the war. The editor's feelings towards the President were, therefore, similar to those of the proverbial woman scorned.

## CHAPTER V

### THE "GETTYSBURG ADDRESS"

DURING the presidential period Lincoln made no political speeches and he declined most of the invitations to deliver addresses, on the plea of pressing public business. The only speeches after March 4, 1861, are the responses to serenades, of which there is a goodly number and which will be given special attention elsewhere, and one occasional speech, the "Gettysburg Address." For our purposes this is a fortunate circumstance, for it enables us to devote more time to the study of this address than would otherwise be possible. The "Gettysburg Address" presents many interesting problems and has given rise to much misunderstanding and misrepresentation. During the past twelve years it has been investigated by many students and the main facts

in connection with it are now fairly well established. Unfortunately, however, here as elsewhere error has been very tenacious and a brief statement of the real facts may still be of value.

It has long been known that the "Gettysburg Address" is preserved in several different versions, three of these being in Lincoln's own handwriting. Before leaving Washington Lincoln made two copies of the address, now known as the Hay and the Nicolay MS. respectively, and after reaching Gettysburg he made some slight changes in the Nicolay copy, which he held in his left hand, but apparently did not read from, when he delivered it. Some time after returning to Washington he made a third copy, differing slightly from the other two copies. This third copy was made for facsimile reproduction for the benefit of the Baltimore Sanitary Fair. As he had written on both sides of the paper he made another copy, giving the first one to Mr. George Bancroft. Still another copy was made for Mr.



Everett to be bound with a copy of Everett's oration. The later version was evidently influenced by the report of the Associated Press, which seems to have reproduced the slight changes from the MS. made by Lincoln in the delivery.

Fourteen years ago the late Major Lambert, the great collector of Lincolniana, and I made careful studies of the "Gettysburg Address," with special reference to its form and its immediate reception by the public, and these were followed, in 1913, by a similar investigation by Mr. Isaac Markens, entitled, *Lincoln's Masterpiece*. It is an interesting fact that the first two studies, each made without knowledge of the other and based largely upon different newspaper material, reached practically the same conclusions and that these conclusions have been corroborated by the later study.

It was assumed by earlier writers on Lincoln who paid any attention to the matter that the address had appeared only in the

slightly differing versions of Lincoln's MS., the report of the Associated Press and the report of the Massachusetts commission. An examination of the files of a number of newspapers from different parts of the country, however, shows not only several slight deviations from the original, due to carelessness of either telegraph operators or compositors, but also several wholly different reports. The most remarkable of these incorrect renderings was found in the *Daily Wisconsin*, of Milwaukee, for November 21, 1863, and the *State Journal*, of Springfield, Illinois, for November 23. It was evidently furnished by the same correspondent and it must have appeared in a number of other newspapers, although these are the only instances that have been noted. Only one sentence follows any one of the four other versions and some of the variations wholly spoil the effect and even misrepresent the meaning. Some idea of the character of this version, if version it may be called, may be formed by the rendering of the opening

sentence: "Four score and seven years ago our Fathers established upon this continent a Government subscribed in liberty and dedicated to the fundamental principle that all mankind are created equal by a good God." The incorrect form of the close, "That the Government the people founded, by the people shall not perish," is found, also, in the report of the Chicago *Tribune*, which is otherwise in the main correct. The *Missouri Republican* is the only paper noted that was satisfied to give merely an abstract of the address. This abstract concludes as follows: "that the government for and of the people, born in freedom, might not perish from apathy." It is fair to assume that the persons whose acquaintance with the "Gettysburg Address" was limited to any one of these distorted versions did not give it a very high position as a specimen of oratory.

Of special interest in connection with the early newspaper reports is the variety of titles under which Lincoln's address is referred to,

not only in different papers, but sometimes even in the same paper. In twelve newspapers and the pamphlet of 1864 it is seven times called a speech and six times each an address, or remarks. In eleven cases, or a little over one half of the total number, the term dedicatory or dedication is added. In a conversation with Noah Brooks, Lincoln is quoted as referring to the unfinished address as a speech and this term is also used in several of the later lives. In Lincoln's final version, of February, 1864, it is headed, "Address delivered at the dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg." The writer in Harper's *Weekly* speaks of "the few words of the President." J. G. Holland, writing in 1865, refers to the address as "the brief remarks of Mr. Lincoln," and H. J. Raymond, writing in 1864, states that "President Lincoln made the following remarks." J. H. Barrett, in his *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 1865, places above the text, "Address at Gettysburg," but in his later work, published in 1904, the title "Gettysburg

Speech" is used. Raymond retains the expression "remarks" in the longer life, published in 1866. Both Raymond and Barrett were warm supporters of Lincoln and Raymond expresses his admiration of the "remarks," but it is hardly possible that either of them could have anticipated their permanent position in the literature of oratory. The later general agreement in the matter of title seems to point to a corresponding agreement as to the character of the address itself.

Perhaps the most convincing negative evidence that the address did not receive full recognition from early readers is furnished by the title page of the first pamphlet describing the dedicatory ceremonies, issued in New York, in 1863. To show more clearly its significance, the title page is given here in full:

"An Oration delivered on the Battlefield of Gettysburg (November 19, 1863), at the Consecration of the Cemetery prepared for the Interment of the Remains of those who

fell in the Battles of July 1, 2, and 3, 1863. By Edward Everett. To which is added interesting Reports of the Dedicatory Ceremonies; Descriptions of the Battlefield; Incidents and Details of the Battles."

The pamphlet opens with Everett's address, Lincoln's "speech" being given in connection with an account of the ceremonies by the special correspondent of the New York *Tribune*. The only comment upon Lincoln's address in the pamphlet is the exceedingly negative one taken from the New York *Times*, which is quoted in a later discussion. In the second pamphlet on the ceremonies, published in Boston, early in 1864, the title includes, "the Dedicatory speech of President Lincoln." Another bit of negative testimony is furnished by this pamphlet by the fact that, although a number of letters is printed with reference to Everett's oration, neither Everett's interesting note to Lincoln, expressing his admiration of the address, nor the latter's acceptance

of the invitation to speak, is furnished. The natural conclusion to draw from this is that, in the opinion of the editor of the pamphlet, at least, Lincoln's address was of minor importance.

Similar evidence is furnished by the New York *Times*, for November 20, which comments editorially upon Everett's oration and upon a speech delivered by Henry Ward Beecher, on the evening of the 19th, in the Brooklyn Academy of Music, without even mentioning Lincoln's address. This omission is the more striking as the *Times* was markedly friendly towards the administration. The account of the delivery of the address by the special correspondent of the *Times*, however, would hardly direct attention to it:

“President Lincoln's brief address was delivered in a clear, loud tone of voice, which could be distinctly heard at the extreme limits of the large assemblage. It was delivered (or rather read from a sheet of paper which



(the speaker held in his hand) in a very deliberate manner, with strong emphasis, and with a most businesslike air."

The New York *World* and the Philadelphia *Enquirer*, which latter prints an incorrect report of the address, are, also, without editorial comment. The Chicago *Tribune*, a warm supporter of the President, adds nothing to the statement by the special correspondent that "the oration by Hon. Edward Everett, the solemn dirge by the choir, and the dedicatory remarks by President Lincoln, will live long among the memories of the war." Even the *State Journal*, of Springfield, Illinois, an administration organ, for which Lincoln and Herndon had frequently written and in which many of Lincoln's early speeches appeared for the first time, makes no comment upon the address. This last omission may perhaps be regarded as an illustration of the usual fate of the prophet in his home town.

We may next consider the attitude of the antiadministration press towards Lincoln's share in the ceremonies of the day. First it should be noted that no positively adverse criticisms of the address considered as a piece of literature were found. The *Knickerbocker Magazine*, of New York, which was one of the strongest organs of the opponents of the war, contains in the issue for December, 1863, under the news of the month, a brief account of the dedication of the Gettysburg Cemetery, in which reference is made to Everett's oration, but with no mention of the shorter address. the *Daily Register*, of Springfield, Illinois, for November 25, contains an editorial that opens as follows:

"Lincoln began his dedicatory address by the enunciation of the following political falsehood: 'Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedi-

cated to the proposition that all men are created equal.' ”

The article then proceeds to abuse the President on account of his political views. The complete address was not printed in the *Daily Register*. The issue for the preceding day contains an article that reflects still more forcibly the bitterness of a portion of the democratic press towards the President. It begins as follows:

“Old Abe at Gettysburg. Nothing could have been more inappropriate than to have invited that prince of jokers, Old Abe, to be present at the consecration of the Gettysburg Cemetery. But having been invited, it was hoped by his apologists that he would at least refrain from his clownish jokes while standing over the new-made graves of the thousands who had been slain in the recent battle.”

The specific reference is to the unfortunate response to the serenade of the evening before

the celebration, which is printed in full in the *Daily Register*. A similar article was published in the Peoria *Daily Mail*, also a democratic paper, which gave the response as characteristic of the general style of the President's public speaking, with only a passing reference to the address proper. The New York *World* and the Chicago *Times*, both democratic, do not comment upon the address at all and the *Daily Milwaukee News* uses it simply as a text for a plea for peace. The Philadelphia *Enquirer* prints an inaccurate version of the address, without any criticism. These instances are sufficient to show that partisanship played an important, though negative, part in the judgment of the literary qualities of the "Gettysburg Address."

The favorable notices of the address may be divided into two main classes: those that give it a rather grudging tribute and those that in part anticipate the verdict of a later day. The *Public Ledger*, of Philadelphia, prints the following:

“The calm and unaffected but most perfect and graceful delivery of Hon. Edward Everett, and the short, modest, fitting address of the President of the United States produced tears at times, and at other times every other emotion as only the highest eloquence can.”

The coupling of the two addresses is particularly interesting, as most later critics and a few of the earlier ones have been inclined to deny to the principal orator of the day the success he undoubtedly achieved. The special correspondent of this paper was apparently not greatly impressed by Lincoln's address, for he writes: “An eloquent prayer was delivered by the Rev. Wm. Stanton [T. H. Stockton]. The President then delivered the following dedicatory speech.” It may be added that the Prayer, which is printed in the Proceedings in 1864, is three times as long as the address. The correspondent of *The New York Times* writes:

"The opening prayer, by the Rev. Mr. Stockton, was touching and beautiful, and produced quite as much effect upon the audience as the classic sentences of the orator of the day."

The following from the Boston *Daily Advertiser*:

"Mr. Lincoln's dedicatory remarks created a most favorable impression. They were delivered in a clear, full voice, and seemed to be emphatically the right words in the right place."

The only notices, all editorials, that were found that sound the note of enthusiasm occur in the Springfield *Weekly Republican*, the Boston *Evening Transcript*, the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, the Providence *Journal*, and Harper's *Weekly*. To these may be added the report of the joint special committee of the city of Boston. As will be seen, the authors of the first two of these appreciations were of the opinion that Lincoln did not de-

serve to be regarded in general as a great speaker. That this feeling was far more general than is usually supposed is clearly shown by the following passage in J. G. Holland's *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, published in 1866, the preface of which is dated November, 1865:

"The brief remarks of Mr. Lincoln, though brought into immediate comparison with the elaborate eloquence of the venerable Massachusetts orator, were very effective, and betrayed a degree of literary ability quite unexpected to those who had read only his formal state papers."

The editorial in the *Transcript*, for November 21, reads as follows:

"President Lincoln is not a polished speaker, neither does he wield a polished pen. But he has a way of saying the fitting thing, expressing the right thought or feeling in homely phrase that gives to the thought or feeling its due place above all regard to mere style. Thus is gained a remarkable power



in the way of an emphatic and direct simplicity, which reaches and holds every reader.

“An impressive illustration of this is the brief dedicatory speech at Gettysburg. As reported by telegraph it is rough and loose. But the uncut fragment is full of jewels.”

Apparently the writer thought that the report of the Associated Press, which appeared in this paper, departed radically from what Lincoln said. He may even have believed that it was merely an abstract, conveying beautiful thoughts in an inadequate and incomplete form. In his excuse it may be urged that the English language had never before contained an address that to such a degree combined the qualities of beauty and brevity. The nearest approach to it is the exquisite speech of farewell at Springfield. The second criticism, which appears to have been written by the earliest of the critical biographers of Lincoln, Dr. J. G. Holland, expresses precisely the same thought as regards Lincoln's

customary style, but with an added note of more genuine admiration:

“Surpassingly fine as Mr. Everett’s oration was in the Gettysburg consecration, the rhetorical honors of the occasion were won by President Lincoln. His little speech is a perfect gem; deep in feeling, compact in thought and expression, and tasteful and elegant in every word and comma. Then it has the merit of unexpectedness in its verbal perfection and beauty. We had grown so accustomed to homely and imperfect phrase in his productions that we had come to think it was the law of his utterance.”

The criticism of the *Bulletin*, although it sounds to us now slightly condescending, belongs distinctly among the laudatory notices:

“The President’s brief speech of dedication is most happily expressed. It is warm, earnest, unaffected, and touching. Thousands who would not read the long, elaborate oration of

Mr. Everett will read the President's few words, and not many will do it without a moistening of the eye and a swelling of the heart."

Closer to the superlative note of to-day is this notice of the *Journal*:

"We know not where to look for a more admirable speech than the brief one which the President made at the close of Mr. Everett's oration. It is often said that the hardest thing in the world is to make a five-minutes' speech. But could the most elaborate and splendid oration be more beautiful, more touching, more inspiring, than those thrilling words of the President? They had in our humble judgment the charm and power of the very highest eloquence."

In the same vein as this appreciation is the editorial in Harper's *Weekly*, for December 3. It is tempting to assume that it was written by George William Curtis, who was at that

time the leading editorial writer for that publication and whose discriminating taste seems to be reflected by the article. If Curtis was the author he may have been helped to reach his happy conclusion by the following statement by Longfellow, contained in a letter written to Curtis under the date November 19: "This morning's paper brings the report of Lincoln's brief speech at Gettysburg, which seems to me admirable." Apparently either the letter was dated a day ahead or some Boston paper, which has not been identified, published the address on the day of the ceremonies. The article reads as follows:

"The oration of Mr. Everett was smooth and cold. Delivered, doubtless, with his accustomed graces, it yet wanted one stirring thought, one vivid picture, one thrilling appeal.

"The few words of the President were from the heart to the heart. They cannot be read, even, without kindling emotion. 'The world

will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what you did here.' It was as simple and felicitous and earnest a word as was ever spoken."

Surprisingly few estimates of the address by Lincoln's contemporaries have been found and most of these occur in the lives published in 1864 and 1865. The earliest of these biographies is that by H. J. Raymond, an intimate friend and strong supporter of the President. The only mention of the address in it is the following: "Hon. Edward Everett delivered the formal Address, and President Lincoln made the following remarks." The passage is repeated, without any addition, in the larger work by the same author, published in 1866. In addition to the passage already quoted, J. G. Holland, writing in 1865, says: "Did Mr. Everett say more or better in all his pages than Mr. Lincoln in these lines?" J. H. Barrett, in his *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 1865, writes: "But no fitter or more touching

words were spoken than those of Mr. Lincoln." In his later work, *Abraham Lincoln and his Presidency*, 1904, Barrett discusses the question of the contemporary estimates of the address and expresses the conviction that its supreme merit was immediately acknowledged. But the author is contradicted by his own words, expressed in the earlier work, which do not at all suggest the admiration of the later estimate. The tribute by Horace Greeley, contained in the second volume of *The American Conflict*, published in 1866, is especially noteworthy, as Greeley was on many points strongly opposed to the policy of Lincoln and on one occasion, at least, he had been very harshly criticized by the latter. He writes as follows:

"Although the oration of Edward Everett was patiently listened to . . . the central figure on the platform was the tall, unassuming, ungainly 'rail-splitter' from the prairies, and the only words uttered that the world cares to

remember were those of the President, who, being required to say something, thus responded."

Of the contemporary estimates outside of the newspapers and the lives, that of Longfellow has already been noted. The day after the celebration Edward Everett wrote to the President a courteous note, which includes the following magnanimous sentiment:

"Permit me, also, to express my great admiration of the thoughts expressed by you, with such eloquent simplicity and appropriateness, at the consecration of the cemetery. I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion in my two hours as you did in two minutes. My son, who parted from me at Baltimore, and my daughter, concur in this sentiment."

This statement is of special interest as it may be responsible for the picturesque but



apocryphal story, found in so many lives of Lincoln and elsewhere, that a similar remark was made by Mr. Everett on the platform at Gettysburg, as he grasped the President's hand. No verification has been found of the statement by Barrett in his later work, on the authority of Lincoln's old friend, Joshua Speed, that Charles Sumner, a year or two after Lincoln's death,

“said that the address was the most finished piece of oratory he had ever seen. . . . He said that when he first read it he had thought the word ‘proposition’ improperly used, but, upon reflection, and in the effort to put some other word in its stead, he came to the conclusion that his first impressions were wrong.”

Of more weight, because of its source, is the statement by Charles A. Dana, in *Recollections of the Civil War*, 1902:

“I remember very well Mr. Stanton's comment on the Gettysburg speeches of Edward Everett and Mr. Lincoln. ‘Edward Everett

has made a speech,' he said, 'that will make three columns in the newspaper, and Mr. Lincoln has made a speech of perhaps forty or fifty lines. Everett's is the speech of a scholar, polished to the last possibility. It is elegant, and it is learned; but Lincoln's speech will be read by a thousand men where one reads Everett's, and it will be remembered as long as anybody's speeches are remembered who speaks in the English language.' "

This fine appreciation, completely voicing modern, critical opinion, may be connected with Stanton's remark as he stood by the body of his dead chief, "Now he belongs to the ages."

The number of later eulogies is as large as the number of persons who have written about the address, but they are of value only as emphasizing the position that the address has assumed in the literature of oratory.

Of a negative character, but of immense importance as indicating general lack of rec-

ognition of the real position of the address less than a decade after its delivery, is the following account, occurring in J. W. Draper's *History of the American Civil War*:

“When the appointed funeral oration was completed, a low murmur ran through the audience, and the care-worn President, rising, bent reverently forward, and unpremeditatedly and solemnly said: ‘It is intimated to me that this assemblage expects me to say something on this occasion. We are met here to dedicate a portion of this field.’”

Now, if a man of the intelligence and insight of the author of this work could assume at that late date that the “Gettysburg Address” was an extempore effort and could quote it so carelessly and with so little regard to the facts in the case, it is safe to assume that the address had not yet been generally accepted as an American classic, however much it may have excited the admiration of discriminating individuals. Like so many other

great works of literature, the "Gettysburg Address" won universal acceptance only after many years. Few if any of those who were impressed by its beauty of thought and felicity of expression when they first heard or read it realized that it would ever receive the praise later accorded it by the London *Spectator*, as one of the four greatest memorial addresses of the world's literature. [We believe now that that is the correct estimate of the "Gettysburg Address," but if the writer in Harper's *Weekly*, for December 5, 1863, had allowed his enthusiasm to express itself in such a eulogy his readers would undoubtedly have entertained serious doubts of his critical judgment if not of his sanity.

To sum up, we are justified in assuming the following facts: that it was very carefully prepared in Washington and that only slight changes were made in it after the arrival at Gettysburg, that there is no reason to believe that any part of it was written on the train, that the claim that Lincoln wrote the whole

address on the back of an envelope at Gettysburg is absolutely false. The theory that the address was wholly extempore deserves no serious attention. The story that Mr. Everett, on the conclusion of the address, grasped the President's hand and expressed his willingness to exchange his hundred pages for Lincoln's twenty lines, undoubtedly owes its origin to the note of congratulation written by Everett the following day.

## CHAPTER VI

### MESSAGES AND PROCLAMATIONS

THE messages to Congress are as different in literary merit from the ordinary run of presidential messages as the two inaugurals are superior to most of their predecessors. While they deal in the main with sober facts and recommendations, like the speeches and formal addresses, they often contain passages of surpassing beauty and distinction. I believe that only one President since Lincoln has shown in this class of writings anything like the same claim to literary distinction. It seems a pity that Lincoln did not revive the excellent practice of the earlier Presidents of delivering his messages to Congress in person.

The messages are of two main classes. First, brief communications on special sub-

jects, such as appointments in the army or navy, international questions, such as the Trent Affair or the demand for indemnity by foreign countries, etc. These messages often consist of a single sentence and none of them show any literary qualities. They are as impersonal as a business communication. } [The second class, smaller in number but very much larger in bulk, contains five messages, the Message to Congress in Special Session, of July 4, 1861, and the four Annual Messages. ] The first of these, in turn, differs from the other four in being limited to a single subject, the military situation and the best method of meeting it. This message may be regarded as a sort of corollary to the "First Inaugural Address." But, like the "First Inaugural Address," this message is not confined to the practical consideration of the immediate problem, but it considers this problem in its relation to representative government throughout the world. The same may be said of all of the messages, for, in spite of their practical pur-



pose, each of them is suffused with political philosophy.

This philosophical side of Lincoln's first communication to Congress, which was appropriately made on the anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, is clearly shown in the following paragraph:

"And this issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. It presents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy—a government of the people by the same people—can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes. It presents the question whether discontented individuals, too few in numbers to control administration according to organic law in any case, can always, upon the pretenses made in this case, or on any other pretenses, or arbitrarily without any pretense, break up their government, and thus practically put an end to free government upon the earth. It forces us to ask:

‘Is there, in all republics, this inherent and fatal weakness?’ ‘Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?’ ”

This message contains a passage to which the public printer objected, on the ground that it was undignified for a state paper. To this objection Lincoln is reported to have replied: “Well, Defrees, if you think the time will ever come when the people will not understand what ‘sugar-coated’ means, I’ll alter it; otherwise I think I’ll let it go.” It would be easy to draw the conclusion from this anecdote that Lincoln had no consideration for the form of his public communications so long as the meaning was clear. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Lincoln had the sensitiveness to shades of meaning of the literary artist and in this case “sugar-coated” happened to be just the word called for to carry out the figure of the drugged public.

The messages show the tendency of the carefully prepared political speeches to the use of an effective, sometimes splendid, peroration. One of the finest of these, suggesting in its general spirit the conclusion of the "Cooper Institute Address," is the close of this first message: "And having thus chosen our course, without guile and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God and go forward without fear and with manly hearts."

The philosophy of the first Annual Message, of December 2, 1861, is the relation of capital to labor, with special reference to the institution of slavery as inimical to free labor. The principal practical problem discussed in the message is the danger of foreign intervention and the necessity for maintaining the public defense. The message opens, as do all the subsequent ones, with an expression of thanksgiving. Although these greetings are much alike, the finest of them is found at the beginning of the second Annual Message, of December 1, 1862, and it reads as follows:

“Since your last annual assembling another year of health and bountiful harvests has passed; and while it has not pleased the Almighty to bless us with a return of peace, we can but press on, guided by the best light He gives us, trusting that in His own good time and wise way all will yet be well.”

The discussion of capital and labor repeats in large part the arguments and sometimes reproduces the exact language of the address on agriculture, of 1859. Some of the arguments in favor of improving agricultural methods are also repeated in connection with a strong recommendation for the establishment of a department of agriculture, about which he says:

“Agriculture, confessedly the largest interest of the nation, has not a department nor a bureau, but a clerkship only, assigned to it in the government. While it is fortunate that this great interest is so independent in its nature as to not have demanded and extorted more from the government, I respectfully ask

Congress to consider whether something more cannot be given voluntarily with general advantage."

The close of this message resembles, in its elevation of style and depth of thought, the close of the first message:

"There are already among us those who, if the Union be preserved, will live to see it contain 250,000,000. The struggle of to-day is not altogether for to-day—it is for a vast future, also. With a reliance on Providence all the more firm and earnest, let us proceed in the great task which events have devolved upon us."

The second Annual Message to Congress enjoys the distinction of being the longest of the five formal messages. It is even more highly colored by political philosophy and prophecy than its predecessor and its imaginative and eloquent peroration is hardly inferior to the more familiar close of the "Second In-

augural Address." It is not without significance that this document was issued just a month before the Emancipation Proclamation. The central theme of the address is the preservation of the Union, and as a necessary contribution to this, the abolition of slavery. As an example of the imaginative discussion of the central theme we may take the following:

"A nation may be said to consist of its territory, its people, and its laws. The territory is the only part which is of certain durability. 'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever.' It is of the first importance to duly consider and estimate this ever enduring part. That portion of the earth's surface which is owned and inhabited by the people of the United States is well adapted to be the home of one national family, and it is not well adapted for two or more. Its vast extent and its variety of climate and productions are of advantage in this age for one people, whatever

they might have been in former ages. Steam, telegraphs, and intelligence have brought these to be an advantageous combination for one united people. . . .

“Our national strife springs not from our permanent part, not from the land we inhabit, not from our national homestead. There is no possible severing of this; it would multiply, and not mitigate, evils among us. In all its adaptations and aptitudes it demands union and abhors separation. In fact, it would ere long force reunion, however much of blood and treasure the separation might have cost.

“Our strife pertains to ourselves—to the passing generations of men; and it can without convulsion be hushed forever with the passing of one generation.”

And finally the superb peroration, a peroration of which Burke or Webster would not have been ashamed:

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inade-



quate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

“Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail.

The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.”

The main theme of the third Annual Message is reconstruction and it is treated in the moderate, conciliatory, but at the same time firm, spirit that appears in Lincoln's last public address. As in that address, furthermore, the subject is discussed in plain, simple manner and without the imaginative appeal that we have noted in the other messages. There is, however, in the close something of the oratorical in the eulogy of the army and navy, “to whom, more than to others, the world must stand indebted for the home of freedom disenthralled, regenerated, enlarged, and perpetuated.”

The fourth and last Annual Message follows the same general lines and is of the same general character as the third. It closes with this simple but effective sentence: “In stating a single condition of peace, I mean simply

to say, that the war will cease on the part of the government whenever it shall have ceased on the part of those who began it.”

Like the messages, the proclamations may be divided into two main classes: those dealing with formal matters, such as calls for troops, announcements of blockades and the like, which show no literary qualities, and the more personal expressions of feelings contained in the announcements of fasts and thanksgivings in connection with the various events of the war, together with the two Emancipation Proclamations.

- In view of the importance of the subject and the fame of the document itself, we should be inclined to look for special literary beauties in the final Emancipation Proclamation, of January 1, 1863. Probably no single piece of writing of the same length cost Lincoln greater care and anxiety, as no other involved greater or more pressing interests. Yet, with the exception of the closing words, this all-important

paper is as lacking in literary qualities as the calls for troops and the formal communications to Congress on routine business. Perhaps President Lincoln felt here as with the debates with Douglas that "the occasion is too serious, the issues are too grave," not only for jesting but even for attempting the mere graces of language. The closing words, however, are characterized by dignity and elevation worthy of Burke or Webster:

"And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

For brevity and beauty of expression, combined with completeness and unity of thought, this sentence could hardly be surpassed. It is carefully constructed, too, with a view to the best effect of a period swelling to a har-

monious close. But it is for the character of the statement that the sentence is especially striking. Within the limits of thirty-three words, an English sentence of average length, Lincoln succeeded in presenting a complete explanation and defense of the principle of emancipation, as it appeared to him. Lincoln hated slavery and sincerely believed the act that in part abolished this institution to be an act of justice. But that alone would not suffice in his eyes. The act must be constitutional, and under the Constitution, as Lincoln interpreted it, emancipation was lawful only as a war measure and it could be applied only to those parts of the country that were in rebellion. In these thirty-three words Lincoln's chief political conviction is expressed as clearly and as convincingly for those that sympathized with him as in all his contributions to the Debates of 1858. It has been claimed that this sentence, with the exception of the phrase "upon military necessity," was suggested by

Secretary Chase. If this be true, we find in Lincoln's addition further proof of his superior discernment, for without the motive of military necessity the act would have been clearly unconstitutional. Secretary Chase, if he had been in Lincoln's place, might have allowed his enthusiasm for the cause of abolition to get the better of his judgment, as General Frémont had actually done on a recent occasion. But not so Lincoln. His careful training in the law and his profound feeling for essentials helped him here as in so many other crises.

The most striking characteristic of the proclamations of fasts and thanksgivings is their evident sincerity. In expressing a confidence in the overruling will of God and a belief in the efficacy of prayer President Lincoln meant every word that he wrote, nor would he have written the words had he not meant them. During the heat of conflict the opinion was often expressed by his opponents that the President introduced these references, not because

they were natural to him, but simply in order to produce a favorable impression upon certain classes of people whose support he wished to gain. If disproof of this charge were needed now it could be found in the large number of similar passages in Lincoln's private correspondence and his addresses long before he had come prominently before the people and where nothing could be gained by the references. In this, as in everything else, Lincoln spoke and wrote as he thought, and if, like every sane man, he kept some of his thoughts to himself, he never expressed anything that was directly contrary to his convictions. The same honesty that gave him a reputation as a lawyer appears in all his utterances. More reasonable though far from certain is this suggestion, made by Joseph H. Barrett, a well-informed and sympathetic early biographer:

“The last Thursday of November, 1863, was designated as a day of national Thanksgiving, in a proclamation (October 3), which suggests,



in its fluent and pious periods as well as its optimistic tone, the skilled hand of Secretary Seward, who countersigned the President's signature."

Barrett refers, also, to an earlier proclamation of a fast as "genuine 'Sewardese.'" Curiously enough, the paragraph just preceding this disclosure of Seward's literary complicity closed with these no less "pious" words from the letter to Conkling: "Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in His own good time, will give us the rightful result." It is an interesting fact that the Thanksgiving Proclamation just cited was the first of its kind and that the celebrating of the last Thursday of November as a national day was thus established by President Lincoln.

This religious thought is the dominant note in the Springfield farewell address, as may be shown by the following: "Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended

him I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail." It matters little whether the actual name of God appears, as in one version, or whether the reference takes the form given by Nicolay and Hay in the version just quoted. The general sentiment appears over and over again in slightly varying forms in the proclamations.

The two literary influences that appear in the proclamations are the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. As we have already seen, the first influence is not new but appears at all periods of Lincoln's writings, private as well as public. The second seems to be confined wholly to this one class of writings, belonging to the presidential period. As it is an exclusive feature of the proclamations it may properly be considered first.

Recalling the fact that Seward was an Episcopalian and that the proclamations were countersigned by him as Secretary of State, we may attach some importance to Barrett's claim of

Seward's influence upon Lincoln in the preparation of these documents. It will be recalled that the germ of the exquisite conclusion to the "First Inaugural Address" was furnished by Seward. In spite of this circumstantial evidence, however, I believe that if Seward had any share in the preparation of the proclamations it consisted, as with the "First Inaugural Address," of mere suggestions, the actual form being Lincoln's. It is not at all unlikely that Lincoln often failed to realize that he was using the words of the Prayer Book when apparently quoting from it. The phrases had probably lodged themselves in his memory during some church service, to be drawn upon later at the proper time. It is easy, too, to exaggerate the extent of an apparent literary influence and to refer to it features that really proceed from other sources. The habit, for example, of using words in pairs, which the proclamations show in common with the Prayer Book, may have been suggested by the formal

language of the law. If this be true, however, it is strange that Lincoln should confine this habit of coupling words almost entirely to this one class of writings. If the device had been suggested by the style of his professional reading we should look for evidence of the influence at an earlier period than the last four years of his life, the only period of his manhood when he was not either studying or practicing law. The purpose of the repetition, too, is not to give greater clearness of expression, as in legal writings, but to add distinction and grace to the diction.

But in order that the reader may decide for himself, a few examples of this feature are given from the first proclamation of a national fast day, from August 12, 1861:

“And whereas it is fit and becoming in all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God; to bow in humble submission to His chastisements;

to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions, in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the pardon of their past offenses, and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action . . . and in sorrowful remembrance of our own faults and crimes as a nation and as individuals, to humble ourselves before Him and to pray for His mercy—to pray that we may be spared further punishment, though most justly deserved; that our arms may be blessed and made effectual for the reëstablishment of law, order, and peace throughout the wide extent of our country; and that the inestimable boon of civil and religious liberty, earned under His guidance and blessing by the labors and sufferings of our fathers, may be restored in all its original excellence.”

In a similar strain and equally in the style of the Prayer Book, even when not suggesting

special passages, are the following, taken from different proclamations:

“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. . . . It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”

“It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged as with one voice by the whole American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow citizens . . . to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.”

“For blessings and comforts from the Father, of mercies to the sick, wounded, and

prisoners, and to the orphans and widows of those who have fallen in the service of their country, and that they will continue to uphold the Government of the United States against all the efforts of public enemies and secret foes."

"Moreover, He has been pleased to animate and inspire our minds and hearts with fortitude, courage, and resolution sufficient for the great trial of civil war into which we have been brought by our adherence as a nation to the cause of freedom and humanity, and to afford to us reasonable hopes of an ultimate and happy deliverance from all our dangers and afflictions."

The number of Bible quotations is not as large as would be expected in writings of this nature and from so close a student of the Scriptures as Lincoln. Only four such passages were noted, the same number that occurs in the "Second Inaugural Address." They are as follows:



"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," Psalms 111:10.

"To recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord." The reference seems to be to Psalms 33:12, "Blessed are the nations whose God is the Lord Jehovah."

"A punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins." This seems to be an echo of Psalms 19:13, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."

"Keeping the day holy to the Lord." "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," Exodus 20:8.

It is suggestive that in the first quotation the form found in the Psalms is preferred to that of Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." President Lincoln probably had no idea that he had given such preference, but made his selection either uncon-

sciously or on the ground of euphony. It is even possible that he had in mind the passage in Proverbs and gave it a slight twist, as he, like Bacon and Lamb, not infrequently did with quotations both sacred and profane. The only apparent reason for the general selection of passages from the Psalms, from which three of the four quotations are taken, is the natural association of this book of praise and thanksgiving with the class of writings under consideration. No such tendency is found in Lincoln's other Bible references.

It remains to note a few passages of special force or beauty, for which no original appears to exist. Among these are to be found some possible suggestions of the style of Cranmer:

"And finally to lead the whole nation through the paths of repentance and submission to the Divine Will back to a perfect enjoyment of union and fraternal peace."

"They [bounties] cannot fail to penetrate and soften the heart which is habitually in-

sensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. No human council hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath, nevertheless, remembered mercy.”

The closing words of this proclamation are interesting as in part anticipating the close of the “Second Inaugural Address”:

“And I recommend to them that, while offering up ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do, also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the divine purpose, to the

full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity, and union."

The relation to the later composition seems almost that of a first draft to the finished work.

The conclusion of the last proclamation for Thanksgiving, from October 20, 1864, though fairly suffused with Biblical coloring, seems to be original. Such suggestions of the Biblical style without reference to any particular portion of the Bible are even more significant than actual quotation. They resemble the Biblical coloring of Bunyan and Ruskin:

"And I do further recommend to my fellow citizens aforesaid that on that occasion they do reverently humble themselves in the dust, and from thence offer up penitent and fervent prayers and supplications to the great Disposer of Events for a return of the inestimable blessings of peace, union and harmony throughout the land which it has pleased Him to assign as a dwelling place for ourselves and for our posterity throughout all generations."

## CHAPTER VII

### LECTURES AND OCCASIONAL ADDRESSES

DURING 1859, and early in 1860, Lincoln delivered a lecture entitled, "Discoveries, Inventions, and Improvements," which in some portions suggests the "Milwaukee Address" on agriculture. Lincoln refers to it on several occasions and one letter declining an invitation to give it in Galesburg has been preserved. He refers to it as "a sort of lecture read to three different audiences during the last month and this," adding that he could not spare the time from the courts. On Washington's Birthday, 1860, just before leaving for New York to deliver the "Cooper Institute Address," Lincoln gave this lecture, apparently for the last time, before the Springfield Library Association. The MS. of the lecture is preserved in

the great Gunther collection of Lincolniaana of Chicago. Evidently it is not complete and it is more than probable that Lincoln did not confine himself to the MS., but made changes and additions as he spoke. It is interesting in one respect in containing the only quotation from Plato to be found in Lincoln. I should not, however, take this as internal evidence that Lincoln had read the Greek philosopher, as he was in the habit of picking up quotations wherever he happened to find them, as a hen picks up corn.

An interesting account of this lecture is given by Mrs. N. B. Judd, of Chicago, which tends to confirm the impression that it was not always delivered in accordance with the text. Mr. Lincoln was spending the evening on the Judd piazza overlooking Lake Michigan and

“seemed greatly impressed with the wondrous beauty of the scene, and carried by its impressiveness away from all thought of jars and turmoil of earth. In that mild, pleasant voice,

attuned to harmony with his surroundings, as was his wont when his soul was stirred by aught that was lovely or beautiful, Mr. Lincoln began to speak of the mystery which for ages enshrouded and shut out those distant worlds above us from our own; of the poetry and beauty which was seen and felt by seers of old when they contemplated Orion and Arcturus as they wheeled seemingly around the earth, in their nightly course; of the discoveries since the invention of the telescope, which had thrown a flood of light and knowledge on what before was incomprehensible."

Lincoln explained his interest in these matters by saying that he had prepared and delivered a lecture on "The Age of Different Inventions."

There is, also, a fragment of a lecture on Niagara Falls and Arnold mentions a lecture on Burns, about which I am extremely skeptical. The fragment contains one of the most imaginative passages in Lincoln's writings and



he may in part have been thinking of this in his discussion at the Judd home:

“The mere physical aspect of Niaraga Falls is only this. Yet this is really a very small part of that world’s wonder. . . . It calls up the indefinite past. When Columbus first sought this continent; when Christ suffered on the cross; when Moses led Israel through the Red Sea; nay, even when Adam first came from the hands of his Maker: then, as now, Niagara was roaring here. The Mammoth and Mastodon, so long dead that fragments of their monstrous bones alone testify that they ever lived, have gazed on Niagara—in that long, long time never still for a moment, never dried, never froze, never slept, never rested.”

Nowhere else in Lincoln’s writings do we find so fine an example of the historical imagination. It is only faintly anticipated in the two early rhetorical addresses.

In 1850, Lincoln seems to have delivered a law lecture, though where and under what cir-

cumstances is not known. An interesting fragment of it has been preserved, interesting both as illustrating Lincoln's innate modesty and showing his high conception of legal ethics:

“Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser—in fees, expenses, and waste of time. As a peacemaker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough.”

What a contempt would Dodson and Fogg, or even the less enterprising Mr. Perker, have for such a lawyer!

On September 30, 1859, Lincoln delivered the annual address at the Wisconsin State Fair, in Milwaukee. This speech is remarkable for two reasons. It is the only later long, nonpolitical speech by Lincoln that has been preserved and it has been pronounced by a leading authority on agriculture—the late

Professor Cyril G. Hopkins, of the University of Illinois—to be one of the most intelligent and far-sighted treatments of the general subject of agriculture from that time. In his plea for intensive farming and labor-saving devices Lincoln anticipated many of the most important results of the Morrill Land Act, which, as President, he signed three years later. Although Lincoln ceased to be a farmer when, in 1830, soon after reaching his majority, he left his father's farm, and never even owned a farm himself, he had evidently absorbed an immense amount of knowledge about the principles of farming and in accordance with the habit of his mind he was able to grasp the fundamental principles of the subject, just as he had secured a firm grasp of the principles of the law. For him, furthermore, farming was primarily an economic question and, therefore, its study fitted in quite naturally with his general, political studies. His associate, Judge Davis, was interested in Illinois lands as an investment for himself;

Lincoln was concerned about the proper development of the soil as contributing to the general prosperity of the community. Judge Davis was a shrewd business man; Abraham Lincoln was an enlightened statesman. A careful reading of Lincoln's great agricultural address will help one to understand how a few months later he was able to treat an involved constitutional question with the masterly clearness that amazed the great audience gathered in the Cooper Union auditorium.

The address was first published in the Milwaukee *Daily Sentinel* in a slightly differing form from that of the standard text. These differences have not, I believe, been noted before. In an editorial in the same issue reference is made to "the very able address of Abram Lincoln, of Illinois. It is in every sense a practicable and readable effort, and will repay the attentive perusal."

"The evening before, the Hon. Abram Lincoln, of Illinois, addressed a large crowd

at the Newhall House, on the leading, political topics of the day. Mr. Lincoln is an exceedingly interesting and effective speaker and commanded the earnest and respectful attention of his numerous hearers."

During the presidential period Lincoln was frequently called upon to respond to serenades. On the slightest provocation the people of Washington seemed to gather for the purpose of serenading the much-troubled President, and apparently he never failed to make some response. On the evening of March 4, 1861, the new President was serenaded by at least five different bodies, representing as many states. Three of these responses are printed in the collected works of Lincoln, the fourth I stumbled across in the files of the *New York Times* just in time to include it in my selections from Lincoln, published thirteen years ago. The fifth was discovered in the *Springfield Journal*, where it was reprinted from the *Washington Star*. It is here presented for the

first time to a twentieth-century public. This fifth response is the most interesting and personal of the whole lot, as it was addressed to the Illinois delegation and can, therefore, be connected with the "Farewell Address" of three weeks before. The leader of the delegation was Mr. Isaac N. Arnold, a representative in Congress from Chicago, an intimate friend of the President and one of his most successful early biographers:

"Mr. Arnold, and fellow citizens of my own state of Illinois. I am obliged to you for this renewed mark of your kindness and confidence in my humble self. I have so often addressed the people of Illinois, and so frequently in their hearing said all that I know how to say, that I am a little more troubled what not to say upon this occasion than I have ever been. We are all rejoiced, doubtless, at the success so far of the principles of government which we have regarded as being just and right, which, as I hope, we have contended for only because we

so regarded them, not because of any selfishness or sectionalism, or anything calculated to wrong any other of our citizens or section of our country. I certainly can say for myself, and I think for the rest of you, that these are the sentiments which have actuated all of us. And having advanced as far as we have in this cause, I have to request of you, which I think I need hardly do, that you will sustain me in trying to do ample and full justice to all the people of the different sections of this great confederacy. In saying this, I think I have said as much as I know how to say upon this occasion."

On the evening of April 10, 1865, four days before his assassination, President Lincoln was greeted by an immense crowd that had assembled before the White House to celebrate the fall of Richmond. Instead of making an immediate response to the call for a speech at what would seem to be the psychological moment, the President asked the people to



retire and come back the following day, when he would be prepared to address them in a fitting manner. He added that as everything that he said in public was reported in the newspapers it was necessary for him to be very careful of what he said. The result fully justified the delay, for when Lincoln appeared on the following evening he delivered the longest and most carefully prepared speech of the presidential period. The speech enjoys the further distinction of being his last speech. It deals with the proposed constitution of Louisiana and indicates very clearly his wise policy of reconstruction—a policy which, if it had been followed, would have spared the South untold suffering and humiliation and would have hastened by many years the restoration of that harmony between the sections for which we, as patriotic American citizens, are so thankful to-day.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS

IN discussing Lincoln's letter writing Hern-  
don says:

"In the matter of letter writing he could never distinguish between one of a business nature or any other kind. If a happy thought struck him he was by no means reluctant to use it."

Although this statement is in the main true and applies with equal force to much of his public speaking as well, it is far from applying to the whole correspondence, in much of which Lincoln shows as much restraint and sense of proportion as in his most finished addresses. Unconventional as he was in ordinary relations, as has already been noted in another connection, Lincoln yielded to none in his recogni-

tion of propriety when he considered that the conditions required such compliance. All of his letters of condolence, for example—one of the most difficult classes of letters—are models of their kind, and in his business and official correspondence he is always brief and to the point.

Unfortunately very few letters from the earliest period have been preserved and most of these are of slight importance to the student of his style. The principal correspondent in the early 'forties, when the letters begin to appear in larger numbers, is his most intimate friend from that period, Joshua F. Speed, with whom he found lodging on first coming as a stranger to Springfield. These letters are distinguished from most of Lincoln's other correspondence by their greater length and by the deeper personal note that is sounded. Lincoln reveals his inner nature to Speed as he does to no other correspondent, not even to his last law partner, Herndon. This greater intimacy of expression appears to be due partly to Lin-

coln's confidence in his friend's judgment and sympathy, partly to the fact that they were nearly of an age and had certain experiences of life in common. It is worth noting in this connection, as being greatly to the credit of both men, that they disagreed strongly in the matter of politics and particularly on the subject of slavery. It strikes us with something of a shock of surprise to learn that the most intimate early friend of the great emancipator was a slave owner and an ardent believer in the peculiar institution of slavery. Perhaps the fact that they were both natives of Kentucky was in part responsible for their friendship. It will be recalled that during the congressional period a few years later Lincoln formed an intimacy with Alexander H. Stephens, who became the vice president of the Confederacy. In his choice of friends Lincoln showed the same fine catholicity that distinguished Lamb.

The most interesting of the letters were written in 1842, immediately before and after Speed's marriage and a few months before

Lincoln's own marriage. Like his friend, Speed was at this time subject to fits of nervous melancholy bordering closely upon actual melancholia. Both men, too, showed a marked tendency at this time to introspection and, as Lincoln says in a letter to Speed, they both indulged in "forebodings, for which you and I are peculiar." In spite of his own doubts and fears at this time, Lincoln is ever ready with encouragement and advice to his friend, as is shown in the following extract:

"You say that something indescribably horrible and alarming still haunts you. You will not say that three months from now, I will venture. When your nerves once get steady now, the whole trouble will be over forever. Nor should you become impatient at their being very slow in becoming steady. Again you say, you much fear that that Elysium of which you have dreamed so much is never to be realized. Well, if it shall not, I dare swear it will not be the fault of her who is now your

wife. I now have no doubt that it is the peculiar misfortune of both you and me to dream dreams of Elysium far exceeding all that anything earthly can realize. Far short of your dreams as you may be, no woman could do more to realize them than that same black-eyed Fanny. . . . My old father used to have a saying that 'if you make a bad bargain, hug it all the tighter'; and it occurs to me that if the bargain you have just closed can possibly be called a bad one, it is certainly the most pleasant one for applying that maxim which my fancy can by any effort picture."

During the congressional period, from 1847 to 1849, Lincoln's principal correspondent was his law partner, William H. Herndon, author of the valuable but much-abused *Life of Lincoln*. Herndon was a younger man than his senior partner, but unlike as the two men were in temperament, perhaps, in part, because of that unlikeness, they were evidently very congenial. It may be added that Mrs.

Lincoln did not share her husband's liking for his partner. Most of the letters to Herndon written from Washington naturally deal with politics and with Lincoln's own activity as a congressman. A quotation from one of the letters has already been made in connection with Lincoln's first speech in Congress. Of special interest, in view of the later relations of the two men, is this brief note:

"I just take up my pen to say that Mr. Stephens, of Georgia, a little, slim, pale-faced, consumptive man, with a voice like Logan's, has just concluded the very best speech of an hour's length I ever heard. My old, withered, dry eyes are full of tears yet."

Lincoln, by the way, was still in the 'thirties when he referred to his "old, withered, dry eyes."

The letters to his half-brother are too familiar to call for quotation. They bring out clearly that quality to which in no small degree



Lincoln owed his success as a lawyer and a politician—his common sense, which he himself would probably have called “horse sense.”

Most of the letters from the presidential period, preserved in large numbers, deal with official business, and wherever it was possible Lincoln apparently preferred the condensed form of the telegram. One of the letters, from 1864, is of special interest because it evidently contains the germ of the peroration of the “Second Inaugural Address”:

“I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years’ struggle, the nation’s condition is not what either party, or any men, devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills, also, that we of the North, as well as you of the South, shall pay dearly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will

find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God."

In not a few instances Lincoln both anticipates and echoes passages from his speeches in his personal correspondence, following in the first instance the practice of Charles Lamb, whose essay "The Superannuated Man," for example, is, in the main, an expansion of a letter to Wordsworth. One of the most interesting instances of this tendency to repetition is found in the letter of January 19, 1860, first printed in pamphlet form in 1909 and reprinted in Gilbert A. Tracy's *Uncollected Letters of Abraham Lincoln*. This letter, which is addressed to Alexander H. Stephens, the Mr. Stephens whose oratory Lincoln had so much admired twelve years earlier, enjoys special distinction as being, in the words of the writer, "the longest letter I ever dictated or wrote." In the course of his argument Lincoln makes this statement: "Let me say right here that only unanimous consent of all the states

can dissolve this Union. We will not secede and you shall not." This is clearly an echo of the "Galena Speech," of 1856, apparently closely following the "Lost Speech," which concludes with the words, "*We* do not want to dissolve the Union; *you* shall not." An early anticipation of the main thought of the closing paragraph of the "Second Inaugural Address" may be found in the conclusion of a letter written July 26, 1862:

"I am in no boastful mood. I shall not do more than I can; but I shall do all that I can to save the government. I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing."

In a note to Secretary Stanton, Lincoln uses an ironically humorous style, often appearing in his recorded conversation, but seldom indulged in elsewhere:

"I personally wish Jacob Freese, of New Jersey, to be appointed colonel of a colored

regiment, and this regardless of whether he can tell the exact shade of Julius Cæsar's hair."

This peculiar indorsement, undoubtedly the only one of its kind on the files of the War Department, was suggested by the recent experience of a distinguished engineer, for three years a student at West Point, the late Colonel Julius Adams, of Brooklyn, whose application for a similar appointment had been turned down by General Casey's famous, or rather, notorious examining board because the general and the applicant had disagreed upon some question connected with the theory of light. It was afterwards proved that the general was wrong.

A letter to General Halleck concludes with this striking and illuminating simile: "If he can only maintain this position, without more, this rebellion can only eke out a short and feeble existence, as an animal sometimes may with a thorn in its vitals." Suggestive of the eloquent perorations of the early political

speeches are the closing words of the letter to General Hooker: "Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it; and now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories." Like the crack of a whip or the end of an O. Henry story are these two sentences occurring in a letter to J. J. Crittenden: "No law is stronger than is the public sentiment where it is to be enforced. . . . Compromises of principles break of their weight." The following fine tribute to the Pilgrim Fathers, which occurs in the close of a letter to Joseph H. Choate, might well have been taken for the motto of the tercentennial celebration at Plymouth: "The work of the Pilgrim emigrants was the glory of their age. While we reverence their memory, let us not forget how vastly greater is our opportunity." Although he had a profound reverence for the fathers of the Constitu-

tion and the founders of the colonies, Lincoln never allowed his interest in them to ignore the problems of the present and of the future. In spite of its imaginative turn, his mind was eminently practical.

It was during the presidential period that Lincoln established his position as one of the truly great letter writers, or perhaps we might more properly say, as the author of some of the most beautiful letters in the English language. Lincoln's best-known and most beautiful letter is undoubtedly that addressed to Mrs. Bixby. Hardly less beautiful than the letter itself, which calls for no quotation, is this fine tribute by Richard Watson Gilder:

"This letter of consolation in its simplicity and fitness again recalls the Greek spirit. The letter, and the Gettysburg Address, are like those calm and well-wrought monuments of grief which the traveler may still behold in that small cemetery, under the deep Athenian sky, where those who have been for ages dead are

kept alive in the memories of men by an immortal art."

President Lincoln wrote two other beautiful letters of condolence, which differ from this one in reflecting personal grief as well as warm sympathy. The first example is the letter to Colonel Ellsworth's parents, written May 25, 1861. Lincoln had become sincerely attached to the brilliant young officer, who had studied law in his office in Springfield, and his death was the first of Lincoln's many personal griefs in connection with the war. After expressing his affection for the young man and his admiration of his many fine qualities, Lincoln concludes with these words:

"In the hope that it may be no intrusion upon the sacredness of your sorrow, I have ventured to address you this tribute to the memory of my young friend and your brave and early-fallen child. May God give you that consolation which is beyond all earthly power. Sin-



cerely your friend in a common affliction, A. Lincoln.”

Finally we have a class of letters that are not really letters at all but speeches in letter clothing, in which Lincoln gave expression to his deepest political convictions. Some of these pseudo letters are addressed to individuals, as Horace Greeley and J. C. Conkling; others to organizations, as the workingmen of Manchester and the delegation of the Ohio democratic state convention. The letter to Greeley is undoubtedly the clearest exposition of the President's war policy ever made. In spite of its familiarity, a few of its most striking phrases may be quoted here with profit:

“I would save the Union. I would save it in the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be ‘the Union as it was.’ If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them.

If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it, if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union."

The letter to Conkling, which was written as a substitute for a speech which the President had been asked to deliver before the war democrats of his home town, is much longer than the Greeley letter and less severely expository. This difference between the two letters is largely due to the fact that the Greeley letter was written for publication in the New York

*Tribune* and was, therefore, really an essay. The concluding paragraph of the Conkling letter is in the usual style of the political speeches:

“Still, let us not be oversanguine of a speedy, final triumph. Let us be quite sober. Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in His own good time, will give us the rightful result.”

The conclusion of the letter to the workingmen of Manchester, who, in spite of the hardships they were enduring from the cotton blockade, had expressed to President Lincoln their warm sympathy for the Northern cause, shows a similar rhetorical climax and at the same time carries a message of political wisdom and expediency that is quite as timely now as it was when Lincoln wrote:

“I do not doubt that the sentiments you have expressed will be sustained by your great nation, and, on the other hand, I have no hesitation in assuring you that they will excite ad-

miration, esteem, and the most reciprocal feelings of friendship among the American people. I hail this interchange of sentiment, therefore, as an augury that, whatever else may happen, whatever misfortunes may befall your country or my own, the peace and friendship which now exist between the two nations will be, as it shall be my desire to make them, perpetual."

Finally, we have a class of writings seldom, perhaps never elsewhere, included in literature, which, in the case of Lincoln, yields some of the most brilliant epigrams in the English language. Indeed, in relation to their bulk, the telegrams of Lincoln furnish the most convincing proof of his success in this very difficult art. A distinguished Chicago business man, in an address to the students of the University of Illinois, stated that the ability to write a wholly successful business telegram was the best test of a person's ability as a letter writer. One can hardly imagine Mrs. Nick-

leby writing a good telegram and it was fortunate that Mr. Micawber, with his limited means, lived before the time of the wire.

In his official telegrams, chiefly addressed to generals in the field, Lincoln is always clear and, as in his speeches and his conversation, he does not hesitate to clinch a point with an apt illustration. If at any time he feels that iteration will add to the emphasis of the statement he disregards one of the cardinal principles of the ordinary sender of telegrams and repeats himself. Among the many examples of picturesque messages these two, both addressed to General Hooker, are perhaps the most striking:

“If the head of Lee’s army is at Martinsburg and the tail of it on the plank road between Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, the animal must be very slim somewhere. Could you not break him?”

“In one word, I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river, like an ox

jumped half over the fence, and liable to be torn by dogs front and rear without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other."

The following examples are taken at random, most of them, like the two just quoted, being from the critical year 1863:

"If he stays where he is, fret him and fret him."

"He will be gobbled up if he remain."

"Quite as likely to capture the man in the moon as any part of Lee's army."

"You could board at home, so to speak, and menace or attack him every day."

"You must know that major generalships in the regular army are not as plenty as blackberries."

"Doubtless a small force of the enemy is flourishing about on the skewhorn principle."

"If you can hold your present position, we shall hive the enemy yet."

In no other class of Lincoln's writings do we find so large a proportionate amount of figura-

tive language as in the telegrams, usually the last place to look for such a feature. In his speeches Lincoln is sparing in his use of this device, depending, as a rule, upon sober argument, relieved only occasionally by an imaginative flash. But whether in the speeches or in the telegrams, Lincoln always uses figures of speech not for mere ornament but by way of illustration or to give added strength to his argument, just as in his recorded conversation he introduces funny stories, not for the sake of the stories but by way of illustration. For Lincoln writing and speaking were a means to an end not an end in themselves and, conscious as he was of his own ability, he would have been very much surprised if any one during his lifetime had ranked him among the world's greatest writers.



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